When I Was a Little Girl

*" * * * Todays are dull,*
We will wend our ways
Back to our beautiful yesterdays."

PENULTIMA, "THE LAST HOME BUT ONE"

When I Was a Little Girl

The Year's Round on the Old Plantation

By
ANNA HARDEMAN MEADE

[*Illustrations from Old Photographs of the Day*]

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"Where now with pain thou treadest, trod
The whitest of the Saints of God;
To show thee where their feet were set,
The light which led them shineth yet."

IN recalling and recording these actual scenes and incidents of long ago, for you, my children, I have been guided and encouraged by the thought that I fulfilled your father's earnestly expressed wish. His strong influence, "The light which led," though it is behind me, "shineth yet," a steady ray, ever "going on before," thrice blessed with warmth, light and love, illuminating the way wherein I tread now alone. Let my reminiscences be sacred to the memory of your father, James Turner Meade, and if the book pleases you, accept it as a gift of love from him, and through him from your mother.

A. H. M.

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CHAPTER I.

Penultima and Its People.

"YES, children, I will tell you a story"—so many eyes turned upon me, some black, some brown, some blue, all bright, beautiful and beseeching prove irresistible, but the question comes up, which of the many suppliants shall I gratify? Donald asks for something about the war; Reggie says he might have known Cousin Miriam didn't know anything about horses and dogs, and Virginia wonders if young ladies' trains gave them as much trouble when I was young as they do now, while Unie wants to hear about Christmas in old times, and Merry begs for a story about "When you were a little girl, Cousin Miriam"; so, children, what do you think? Now, don't laugh,—I have concluded to come off here in my own room, by my lone self, where I am undisturbed by conflicting importunities, and *write* you a story, and as Merry's request will embrace the wishes of all, and I have no imaginative genius, it shall be a true story of when I was a little

girl. Memory must take the place of imagination, and as in honor-bound I search the past for something of interest, I find that I cannot bring scenes and incidents clearly to your mind, until you are familiar with my surroundings as they then existed.

As Penultima, my home from my earliest recollection, was the birthplace of your ancestors, and mine, for generations, a description of it will interest you all, I am sure, and if I linger over it, have patience, and remember, that while to others it is but one of many old homes, to me it is the "Holy of Holies," the sacred spot which excludes the cold world of the present and embraces the hope, love and joy of other days, when I was a little girl. I am an old, gray-haired woman now, and many years and many miles separate me here in the city from my childhood's home, but love and memory defy time and space, and clearly and gladly I can recall and describe it to you.

The house was of red brick, solid and square, low and rambling, with wide halls running this way and that, and long galleries on all sides. Surrounded by ample yards, gardens, orchards and out-houses of every size and description, with the "Quarters"—a long double row of whitewashed log cabins in the distance —Penultima presented quite an imposing appearance. It impressed one with its vast dimensions, rather than its grandeur, though it was a fine old place in its day and time. A beautiful lawn, green most of the year in that climate, and well grown with grand old oak, beech and walnut trees, sloped gradually down to the levee, which formed the highway, following the bend of the shining river for many miles. It was the stage road, and on regular days, the "toot-too, toot-too, toot, toot-too, too-oo" of the stage horn called our attention to the

GRANDFATHER McNEILL

lumbering old red-and-yellow coach, drawn through thick mud, or clouds of dust, as the case might be, by its four plodding horses, and piled high in the back with baggage, covered with a funereal black oilcloth. Within this levee, and enclosing the entire plantation, was a rough rock wall, with a heavy gate, whose enormous size seemed to invite the outside world to enter and drive up the grand avenue of spreading trees to the house. Hospitality and good cheer fairly flashed from its many windows and wide doors, and it resounded with the noisy footsteps, happy voices and unrestrained laughter of its numerous inmates.

Our grandfather was the third Donald McNeill who had owned the place, his grandfather having settled there when he came to this country from Scotland, and built the house, which was added to and improved by each successive owner, as prosperity rewarded effort, until it became the ideal home I have described, under Grandfather's direction, when at the age of twenty-two he married Miriam Melville, the daughter of an old English family who came to this country about the same time, and was acknowledged by the exclusive McNeills, after due deliberation, as a worthy mate for the heir of their house. She was seventeen, and they were lovers from the days of round-abouts and pinafores.

The McNeills were noted for three things,—honesty, stubbornness and enormous size and strength. Grandfather was a worthy representative of his race, but his stern virtues were toned down by education and the close companionship of one whose gentle but firm, dignified, composed character his strong influence had helped to form. He was grand and noble, and his name and example are a legacy of priceless value to us. And dear, beautiful Grandmother! They were the only par-

ents I ever knew, and my heart swells with love and pride in memory of them both.

Grandfather and Grandmother had seven sons and three daughters. Donald, my father, was their first-born, and at the age of eighteen was sent to Scotland to complete his education. During his vacation the next year he visited his mother's relatives in England, and being attracted to his orphan cousin, Miriam Melville, by the name most dear to him, he fell so deeply in love with her that her guardian consented to their marriage, before he was twenty, and she but seventeen. They were to come home as soon as he should complete his course, but the fates decreed otherwise. I came into the world fatherless, and my young mother thankfully accepted the father and mother and home urged upon her, and brought me to Penultima, where she lived only a few months, and died, leaving me, an object of tender, loving care, to the large family, who were father, mother, brothers and sisters to me from that time.

Next to my father was Eunice, who married a distant cousin of our name and brought her five fatherless children to live in the old home.

Melville, a son after his father's own heart, chose the independent life of a planter, free from care, and far from the world in those days, and settled down at an early age on his own place, with his little wife, Loulie, the daughter of one of the county families, in the dear old neighborhood, only a few miles from Penultima. Want of ambition was the only fault of which he was ever accused, and his wife, being reared in the same atmosphere, had no tastes or aspirations beyond his, and the perfect peace and content which reigned at Oakwood might well have excited the emulation of the more ven-

GRANDMOTHER McNEILL

turesome, who spread their wings and all too soon were gone from the home nest.

Malcolm and Howard were studying their professions in northern cities; Dorothy and Cornelia were the young ladies of the family; and the three younger boys, Campbell, Kenneth and Reginald, with Donald and Hardie, Aunt Eunice's boys, were nearest my own age and my companions at home and at school. Last, but not least, came her three little girls, Patty, Eunice (or Unie), and Baby Merry, as she was called, to distinguish her from myself. Miss Hale was our governess and dear friend for many years.

And now our servants must take their place in my story, as they do in my heart of hearts, for without them no description of home life can be complete. Our Mammy was not the regulation mammy, children, with fat sides, rolling gait, black, shining features, and a kindly smile; she was very tall and slender, with a form whose flat, ungainly proportions were accentuated, as far as possible, by her severely plain manner of dress; a light brown complexion, dark eyes, hair nearly straight, and peeping from under her brilliant bandana, on every-day occasions in plaits,—when we had grand company and the baby was to be "showed off" it was combed out and allowed to crimp; but when Mammy's hair was curled in a thrifty bunch on each side of her face, the bandana, which was never discarded, pushed far back to display her high comb, a gift from Grandfather himself, every child ran after her to know whether it was a funeral, a wedding, or a big meeting in her church. The set of Mammy's bandana, or "hankcher," was an index to her feelings, which we children learned to read without fail. If it drooped dejectedly in the back and was pulled down nearly to her eyes, as though she tried to hide as much

of her face as possible, showing the green edges of horseradish leaves, whose pungent quality, acting as a counter-irritant, was supposed to relieve pain, we need ask no favors — Mammy had "de mis'ry in her head" and didn't "have no time to fool wid chillen, nohow." On the other hand, if her colors were raised in the rear, and the plaits, crimps, or curls displayed in front, peace reigned supreme. The former condition, be it said to her credit, was of rare occurrence, and Mammy's temper, though hasty and ungovernable, gave little trouble, as it was never displayed towards us, and in the quarters she was regarded with awe and admiration, and her mandate, "Don't none o' you niggers fool wid me! I got *Injun* blood in dese yer veins," was set forth with flashing eyes, quaking turban and uplifted hands, and was carefully obeyed. There was no love lost between Mammy and the overseer, whoever he might be — she considered him "po' white folks," and beneath her notice, and in her he recognized a dangerous rival, she being a person of influence on the plantation, and the carrier of Grandmother's orders. "*I* want four men to shake cyarpets," she would say, and after enjoying his perplexity, would add, as she walked off, "Mistis say sen' 'em," and the four men were forthcoming, no matter how much they were needed in the crop, and Grandfather would only smile. Once when the Master and Mistress were both away from home, and Uncle Stuart McNeill came over from La Vega to look over the place, and see if any instructions were needed, the overseer, after receiving his orders about plantation affairs, said: "Doctor, this old woman's insolence is becoming unbearable, and I want to ask your advice about punishing her." "What old woman?" asked our uncle. "The one they call Mammy, sir. She ought to be sent to the field, sir."

MAMMY

"What!—What," said Uncle Stuart, in amazed and amused consternation, "*Punish Mammy!* Why, I would as soon think of punishing my own mother. Why, man, you would have four of the biggest men in Mississippi down on you if ever you dare suggest such a thing, and *she* knows it. All you can do is to knuckle down to Mammy." Mammy was a woman of strong character, an earnest Christian, a devoted mother to her children, white and black, and a faithful servant and friend.

Uncle Rock, her husband, was Grandmother's carriage driver, head-gardener, and general assistant in the management of her department of affairs in the home,—a position of care and responsibility, which he filled as faithfully for her as he did for her mother before her.

Torm, the butler, and Grandfather's own man, was a character in our household. I suppose he was christened Thomas, but he would not have known himself by a name so dignified. He was short and black, quick-motioned and jolly, with little twinkling eyes, white teeth, and a beaming smile always forthcoming. His manifold duties kept him on the go from morning until late at night; he rubbed the silver, polished the glass, cleaned the boots, waxed the floors, washed the windows, saddled the horses, drove the children's spring wagon, rowed the skiff across the river, found everything that was lost, kept up with Grandfather's spectacles, was on hand to wait on everybody, and never failed to keep breakfast hot for delinquents under the ban of Grandfather's displeasure. His loyalty to "de fam'ly" continued his ruling passion to his dying day.

Jane, the housemaid, was his wife, and the victim of his inveterate teasing and practical jokes; she was a good soul, but not bright, and never could understand his ways. "Torm," I said, "if you don't let Jane alone

she won't love you." "Law, Missy, you makes me laugh," said he. "Jane ain' keerin'—she done los' her tas'e fer me, anyhow; she ain't got sense 'nough to know I jes' funnin'!"

There was Aunt Nacky, the cook, whose duties could never have been accomplished without the able assistance she demanded and received on all occasions.

Many more of the happy black faces are recalled by the mention of these, but I forget, children, that you did not know as I did, these people, so tender and true, so gentle and loving, and so dearly loved—they are closely associated with the day and time of which we old folks love to talk, our youth, and I know not when or where to leave off.

The Sunday afternoon at Penultima, as I recall it now, fully embraces my idea of peace, rest and perfect happiness, though it may have been a little irksome at times. After the cold dinner which was served immediately upon our return from church, Grandfather, in his great chair drawn up to the fire, or tilted back against the post at the southeast corner of the broad gallery, puffed slowly at his pipe with stem so long that he could not reach the bowl, and would call Torm to light the tobacco with a bright little coal, which he preferred to the ill-tasting match. With Grandmother always at his side and never a book or paper, he gave himself up to his family. "Come," he would say, knocking the ashes from his pipe, "let's go to the quarters," and running for caps and sunbonnets, baskets and bundles, we made ready to accompany the Master and Mistress on one of their frequent visits to the old, sick and afflicted servants, who were always objects of their tender care. "Marster," said Torm, "Primus done dead." "Oh, is he? Poor fellow! When?" said Grandfather. "He died las'

night after supper — de doctor say he had de pneumony — Calline jes' now come home f'um over de river; ye can hear her hollerin' no sooner'n ye comes ter de gittin'-over place." Caroline had married a man belonging to one of our neighbors, a very unusual thing for one of our people. Speechless with sympathy and awe in the presence of such grief, we followed Grandmother, hearing the most heart-rending cries as we approached the cabin. Sincere mourners were seated about the room, swaying their bodies and groaning, but speaking not a word to the sufferer. "Hit ain't no use er strugglin' 'gins de Almighty," said one. "Dar, bless Gawd — Mistis comin'!" and, rising to their feet, they placed a chair for her. Taking the poor girl's head in her lap, as she threw herself on her knees before her, Grandmother petted and comforted her, gently and tenderly as a mother. As she became quiet I ventured in, just as she was rocking back and forth, seated on the floor, and saying between her sobs, "Yes, Mistis, Primus wus good ter me — he wus er good husbun', and I gwine ter git me ernother one jes' lak him quick es I kin. Good-bye, Mistis an' Marster, an' thankee ma'am fer de black dress, too — I ain't never had er black dress befo' in my life. Oh, my Lawd! Oh, my Lawd Gawd!"

We moved on up the long street, stopping here and there with some dinner for an invalid, a little gift for some favored one, or the ever-forthcoming "chaw er terbacker." Ole Aun' Crazy Silvey, bent and withered, and blind, with a flaming bandana bound high upon her snow-white head, hobbled out to meet us, feeling her way with a heavy knotted hickory staff, and poured forth her woeful story for the hundredth time, of how "Dese young uns made her head ache fit ter bus', wid dey fuss, er fiddlin' an' er dancin,' an' how she was gwine ter con-

jure 'em twel all de frogs' blood, an' de stump water, an' de rabbit's foots, an' de buckeyes on de plantation wouldn't do 'em no good, ef Marster an' Mistis wouldn't stop 'em no other way." They tried to soothe her with promises, but she followed us, walking up and down and mumbling gruesome threats. She waved her staff towards the river, muttering, "De rains 'scended an' de floods come — de floods — yes, I say de floods — I ain't see three snakes makin' dey track in de dus' fer nuthin'! I tell ye, mun, Silvey *see signs!*" "I wonder if she can mean anything?" said Grandmother. "Oh, no! poor old soul," said Grandfather. But he looked anxiously at the mighty Father of Waters rolling sullenly between the protecting levees. "Bless Gawd! h' yon come de white folks!" said fat, jolly, black Mammy Dinah, the mother of Tom and Dalton, the musical twins. "I'm jis' tollerable, I thank-ye; how ye do yo'sef?" and rising laboriously from her seat in her cabin door, she invited us in with broad smiles and a hearty welcome. She lumbered about, providing chairs, entertained us volubly, and presented each of us children with "er aig," "er big sweet-tater," or a "red year er cawn." "Hi, dere, Missy," she called after me, as we said good-bye; "what dat you doin' whis'lin' 'long er de boys? Don't yer know er whis'lin' 'oman an' er crowin' hen never come ter a good en'? Ye better listen ter yer old Mammy! Ye better, mun!"

Old Uncle Tom Ford was sunning his white head in front of his lonely little cabin, but greeted us standing with one hand on his bended back and the other grasping his staff, the end of which was polished like glass from constant rubbing against his horny palm. "Well, Marster, I ain't so well," he said. "No, Mistis, I ain't so well, ma'am; de mis'ry done fell in de low part er my back;

yo' ole nigger ain't long fer dis worl'. No, ma'am, dat's so — don't none o' us know de Almighty's ways 'zackly, but I'm er gittin' mighty low, Mistis, mighty low," shaking his head mournfully from side to side. "My knees"— and there followed a long list of his troubles, with many an added ache or pain. Uncle Tom was an object of contempt and derision on the plantation among white and black, on account of his propensity for story-telling, and was treated with a show of respect in consideration of his years, which were not so many as he would have had us believe. He, with others, was allowed to come to the garden for turnip-greens in season, but was forbidden to touch the onions, as they were not old enough to use. Having had his suspicions aroused, the overseer said one day, "Tom, what you got in that sack?" "Greens, Mr. Gunn, greens, sir," he answered. "Well, they smell mighty strong. Get down off er that mule and let me see," said Mr. Gunn. Uncle Tom's look of injured innocence changed to one of confusion as he slowly dismounted and more slowly untied his sack. "Now, Tom Ford, ain't you ashamed to tell me that story?" said the overseer. "What dat I say, Mr. Gunn? Did I say greens? I should er said ing'ons; yes, sir, I should er said ing'ons!" Being a hopeless case, he was allowed to go, with a short sermon on the sin of lying, to digest along with his onions.

Our uncle came to the landing one day to be put across the river in a hurry, and seeing no one else, he said, "Here, now, Tom, you look mighty spry this morning; why can't you row me over?" The old head took on its mournful shake until Uncle Tom 'spied the half-dollar in Uncle's hand. He hesitated, moved slowly towards the boat and stooped with a grunt to unfasten the chain, but raised himself and leaned on his staff.

"Mars' Stuart," he said, "*maybe* I *kin* git you 'cross, dough hit do hurt my back, if ye jes' won't let on ter Mr. Gunn, caze *he'll* have me rowin' dis boat *fo'* mile ter town, *upstream.*"

On our return, a crowd of little darkies, with beaming faces and flying feet, collected around us with offerings of shells from the river bank, pretty "blossoms," wild grapes, persimmons, sweet gum, bright leaves, and many other treasures of the woods and fields. They dropped off one by one as we neared the house, where we found the usual number of the people to see Marster and Mistis on business.

Sometimes it was to ask permission to go off the place for a visit; sometimes to beg the use of a mule for a ride; sometimes a new baby to show off, in which case a certain trunk was opened, producing a flowered china mug, a shining plated silver spoon, a cake of sweet soap, a pretty sack or wrapper, or a brilliant striped blanket from the ample supply always on hand for such occasions.

"Well, Fort'n, here you are again; what can I do for you?" said Grandfather, with a twinkle in his eye, as a bright-faced man appeared, followed by a young woman, black as night, with downcast eyes, a dimple in her cheek, and hands rolled up in her apron. "Well, Marster, me an' Chloe was wishin' ter ax yer advice,—dat is ter say, yer permission, sir,—you an' Mistis—." He looked at his companion. "*I* ain't axin' nothin'," said Chloe, tossing her head. "Well, Marster, her *word's* out, an' she say she'll *have* me ef you an' Mistis ain't got no objections." "That's good," said Grandfather; "you shall have my blessing and a fine wedding feast, too, but what's this—*another* couple? Lynch and Ellen! Why, Lynch, ain't you too old to get married?" "No, sir, Marster; what ye talkin' about? I

ain't too ole ter hoe my row in de cotton, is I?" said Uncle Lynch, straightening himself up and looking with pride at his gentle, kindly, middle-aged bride-to-be. "That's so," said Grandfather, "it's never too late to mend, or to marry,—blessings on you, too. And still they come! Alex and Mehaly!" "Yes, Marster, us wants ter marry, too." "Well, well! A triple wedding! The mistress will have to stir herself to have so many white dresses ready, but you shall have them. I love to see the good work go on. We'll have a big time."

And a *big time* we certainly had. Those white dresses were forthcoming when the time arrived, embroidered Swiss, with three wide flounces on the skirts, and angel sleeves; long white veils and wreaths of flowers delighted their hearts. Nice black suits were provided for the men, and all wore white cotton gloves.

The ceremony was performed in our long dining-room, the three couples standing in a semicircle, with two bridesmaids and groomsmen apiece, and each party with its candle-bearer. "I wants Marster ter marry me," said Aunt Ellen. "I ain't studdin' none er you nigger preachers!" They all followed suit, so Grandfather, after what I thought the grandest speech I ever heard, pronounced them man and wife, or men and wives, and they were *married!* "Yes, of co'se, our sort o' marryin'," they said.

We had a long table in the yard lighted with many lanterns, and killed the fatted calf, and pigs, turkeys and chickens, too. They danced all over the long galleries to the music of Yeller Joe's banjo, and all the fiddles the plantation afforded. The musicians played and danced by turns, and all we children danced reels and cotillions with them until supper was ready, when Grandfather

said the hilarity was beyond our bounds, and they continued the festivities at their homes, far into the night.

Each season brought its new work and new pleasure at Penultima. The winter, though short, was quite severe and disagreeable; dull, heavy clouds obscured the sun, and steady rain, with an occasional freeze, drenched our level country for days, and even weeks, together; roads were impassable and boating for pleasure out of all question. The boys would sometimes venture forth for a ride or hunt, but gladly returned to home and solid comfort. The storm-bound wayfarer, not infrequently detained within our walls, was hailed with delight, bringing news from the outside world.

Turning from the dismal outlook and driven to our own resources for occupation and amusement, we met with generous aid and encouragement within; warmth and cheer greeted us from the great blazing, sparkling wood fires. The ladies busied themselves with sewing and fancy-work, and we children studied hard with Miss Hale, receiving due encouragement and reward, each one, from Grandfather down, showing the greatest interest in our work.

In the long dining-room in the evenings, we had noisy games, blood-curdling ghost stories, nut-cracking, candy-pulling, corn-popping, and many other schemes for fun, which no one but our Torm could have devised or executed.

Grandfather's choice library afforded reading for old and young, and the boats coming up the river two or three times a week, brought *Harper's,* and other magazines, Godey's Ladies' Book, letters and papers, plantation supplies, and delicacies for the table, and boxes from tailors, dressmakers and milliners, and, returning, carried off cotton bales and other produce, and firewood,

cut and corded by the negroes, and sold for their own private benefit.

In our passionate love of music, the entire family joyfully agreed, and we had thorough instruction,— both vocal and instrumental — from Miss Hale, until the time when we all took advantage of opportunities afforded us in the cities. I look back upon our efforts in this direction with the utmost delight, bringing us all together for singing, dancing, or, best of all to me, to hear Reggie play his violin, with the flute and piano accompaniment. All the new songs found their way to our home, and voices being easily found for the different parts among so many, they were carefully studied and practiced, and very well rendered. The music was simple and the rhymes quite sentimental. I wish I could recall the love-sick words of "Willie, We Have Missed You," with its large illustration of the couple, stiffly and laboriously embracing as closely as the enormous hoop-skirt would admit,— or the die-away strains of "Thou Wilt Come No More, Gentle Annie—e—e." We practiced church music a great deal; Miss Hale led and instructed the choir, which was composed of most of the young people. We had a dear little church about two miles from the river, in a beautiful place, which was centrally located for our own, and what we called "the other neighborhood," back among the hills. There was a miniature rectory in the rear of the church, which was the home for many years of our good Mr. Halstead and his gentle, kindly wife; closed for weeks together, while the dear old couple occupied a warm corner in the homes and hearts of their people.

We had choir practice in the church when it was convenient, or at one or another of the homes. Miss Hale taught me with special care, at Grandfather's

wish, in order that I might take her place when she should leave us.

Sometimes the girls had friends to spend the Christmas Holidays with them, and for the dances we had then, Big Tom and Dalton, twin brothers from the quarters, were summoned to furnish the music. They were gigantic negroes, exactly alike, as black as night, but with teeth and dimples which any belle might have envied. They never wearied; but with Yellow Joe to pick the banjo, and Grandmother, Miss Hale or myself at the piano, they played their fiddles until daylight, calling the figures in the sing-song, but most inspiring, voices peculiar to themselves, and stopping occasionally to tune up, both the instruments and the inner man,—Grandfather knowing exactly how much egg-nog would make them lively, and when to send them home, happy and sleepy. We had a rousing band, and defied the oldest, stiffest legs to keep still. They were busy, happy days for us all, and came to an end all too soon.

The Lenten season was drawing to a close one April in the long ago, and there was much to be done in order that Penultima should bloom forth in all her glory for the coming Easter-tide, the queen of festivals, and second in Grandfather's mind only to Christmas. As it was the time of year to put in the new crop, the whole plantation, indoors and out, was in an uproar of excitement and busy preparation. The church must be dressed, the big old house must be swept and garnished, and the flower gardens on each side of the house planted.

With the earliest Spring days could be seen Mr. Gunn, the lank, round-shouldered, red-headed, freckled-faced overseer, on his slow, but sure, sorrel horse, drawling out his orders to the men, about plows, har-

THE RECTOR

ness, cleaning up ground and general preparations for the year's crop.

Barrels of prepared whitewash were carted from one end of the plantation to the other, escorted by a brush brigade of the old men and others unfitted for the hardest labor, who plied their trade until buildings, fences, bridges, and even some of the trees, boldly asserted their presence under three coats of the glaring, purifying disinfectant. Trees were topped and trimmed; the lawn was raked and swept; fields were cleared, and the debris lighted into enormous bonfires, 'round which the younger negroes danced and played games late into the night, while they watched that no harm came to buildings or fences.

Within the house, warm, bright carpets and heavy draperies disappeared, floors were waxed and polished to the danger line, rugs placed here and there, with bright strips in the much-used places; ruffled curtains of white muslin floated in the breeze, which could always be found somewhere about the old house. The enormous fire-places were never screened, but whitewashed as far up as could be seen, and filled with fresh-smelling evergreens, into which we children were pleased to mingle the brilliant wild flowers gathered from the fields and woods in our daily walks.

These changes in the home were accomplished with the utmost discrimination under Grandmother's quiet rule, for with a perfect understanding of the minds of men in general, and that of her own man in particular, she carefully avoided all appearance of evil in the form of Spring-cleaning, while silently and surreptitiously, with energy and dispatch, every detail of the great work was pursued to a thorough end.

Nature contributed munificently to the universal adornment, in bright sunshine, blue skies, and green grass, and the countless wild flowers which glorified our Southland. The broad plantations along the river were kept in a state of thorough cultivation, but the rolling woodlands in the rear were given over to luxuriant growth and brilliant bloom, forming a glowing background for the brown acres of low ground sloping to the water's edge, where palmettoes and May-apples grew. Beautiful pond-lilies covered the surface of the shallow pools in their own curious way, and the green willows fringed the levee, forever dipping their long plume-like boughs into the flowing river, or lashing themselves in mimic fury, as a passing steamboat sent the yellow waves rolling ashore.

Violets, pansies and daisies, clover, dandelions and verbena, bluebells, oxalis, and bright-colored phlox covered the face of the earth, while the stately goldenrod lifted its military plumes alongside hydrangeas, laurel, milkweed, and blood-red consumption flowers; alder, sumac and thistle grew in the corners of the crooked rail fence, and flowering vines and trees more conspicuously put forth their fragrance and beauty. Wild roses, grapevines and honeysuckle, yellow jessamine, purple clematis, morning glories, and the gorgeous trumpet flower blossomed everywhere, and the passion-vine ran wild, turning its purple flowers with their mystical crosses to the sun above the tall grass, and hiding the May-pops underneath, where they lay, telling their names as we trod upon them in our eager search. We cut them into baskets and all manner of fancy shapes in their green gourd-like state, and ate them with forced relish as they ripened, yellow, shriveled and insipid.

THE RECTOR'S WIFE

There grew the fringe-tree, sour-wood, and starry white dog-wood, the red bud, hawthorn, and the elegant magnolia with its shining leaves and great wax-like blossoms, so deathly white and sweet; the wild plum and cherry, and the exquisitely delicate violet-scented crab-apple.

Many of these beautiful gifts of nature were in season at Easter, and were carried in wagon-loads to the church, where they were placed in lavish profusion with roses, lilies, snowballs, spirea, almond, heliotropes and geraniums, from the gardens and hot-houses of the neighboring homes. The choice blossoms were arranged by loving, reverent hands among the candles on the white-draped altar, the prayer desk, pulpit and lectern, while others were piled in windows, twined around railings, wreathed among pillars and banked high against the wall in jars of all sizes, whose unsightly appearance was concealed by moss and evergreens, all arranged so as to form miniature mountains, radiant with the freshness and beauty of the woods and fields. When we had cleared away the rubbish, leaving all in readiness for Easter morning, we regarded the outcome of our efforts with deep satisfaction; and no grand city cathedral, with its magnificent decorations of elaborately wrought florist's designs, tall palms and costly hot-house flowers, was ever half so beautiful in our partial eyes as our own little brown church among the vines.

One evening early in May, Grandfather came in late after a long ride over the plantation, called for Torm to take his tired horse, cast aside his hat, gloves and riding whip, and threw himself on the lounge in Grandmother's room. "Well, Miriam," he said, "I may now express my relief and thankfulness that the peril which threatened us is past; for weeks we have lived through the

days and slept through the nights, many feet below the level of the river, steadily rising and threatening every moment to break the levee. We have labored faithfully, strengthening weak points, watching day and night, and measuring the flood at intervals. Yesterday I scarcely dared trust my senses, or the assurances of the experienced men on the place, that the water was falling, having remained at a stand for several days. Now, there is a fall of two inches, and I feel that we are safe, unless we have a heavier rain than any we have had yet, which is hardly possible, and there is surely no appearance of it now."

In the fullness of his relief, Grandfather retired early and slept the sleep of the just, undisturbed by the flashing lightning, the rising wind, or the cloudburst which descended upon us in the dead hour of the night. To this day, I look back upon that storm as the most awful in all my experience. Grandfather's words — "unless we have a heavier rain than any we have had yet," seemed to add fury to the thundering downpour, and I lay awake in the next room listening to his snoring, imagining the noise of the storm was the rushing of great waters let loose upon us, trembling and fearing, yet not daring to get up in the dark and call.

Suddenly, at the dismal hour of four in the morning, the loud clang of the great plantation bell broke into the roar of the storm, continuing its rapid, startling summons, and at the same time I heard a faint tap on the window, and the soft voice of Austin, the foreman, calling, "Marster! Marster! For Gawd's sake, Marster, come! De levee done broke, an' de water's runnin' 'cross de turn row in de upper fiel' jes' dis side de gin! Oh, Gawd A'mighty! Gawd A'mighty!"

"Austin!" sternly said Grandfather, who was at the window before the man had finished speaking. "Be a *man* — the people all look to you — tell Torm to get my horse — call Mr. Gunn — I'll be with you."

And before I could collect my senses he was gone out into the night. I cried in terror, but Grandmother's firm voice and touch quieted me, and, following her example, I dressed quickly and went to call Reggie and the others. Before it was light the rain was over and the whole place in an uproar of excitement.

Rousing Mammy, Grandmother left her in charge of the children, and Aunt Eunice, who was ill; and taking Jane with her, went to the scene of the disaster to assure herself of Grandfather's safety. Almost immediately she found herself surrounded by her children, and the scene was far beyond my power to describe. You have all seen illustrations and heard accounts of floods, and I can only say they are not exaggerated.

The break had occurred in a private levee, which had been hastily thrown up, as the unprecedented rise threatened a certain part of the place, and the entire force was engaged at this point, throwing on logs and filling in with earth here and there, but it was soon evident that nothing could be accomplished. The stream crossing the road, which Austin had reported, increased in volume and velocity, at such an incredible rate, that Grandfather, after regarding the torrent for a moment, gave up all hope of his crop, and turned his attention to saving livestock and everything movable on the place.

Deeply touched by the heroic efforts of the men to save his property, he turned to the overseer and said, "Call them in, Gunn. I will not have them exposed to this danger to their health, if not life."

"Why, Colonel! Why, sir," remonstrated the man, "a half hour's hard work may save part of——" But with one indignant look, Grandfather urged his frightened horse a little farther up the main levee, and himself sent such a shout of recall across the raging waters that not a man dared disobey, though in their ardor and excitement many of them would have gone recklessly on with their desperate task.

Calling Mr. Gunn, who was not in sight when he returned, he gave some rapid orders about the work of saving, which admitted of no delay, and then said, "Remember, sir, in future, *nothing* is of value to me, compared with the safety of my people. See that the men who have been at work all night are allowed to rest as soon as possible."

There was little rest, however, for man or beast that day; a scene of the wildest confusion and excitement followed, when it was known that all hope of saving the place was over — Penultima was "going under" — a thing unknown to the oldest inhabitant. The women shouted and prayed, with screaming children clinging to their skirts, and even the strong men seemed paralyzed at the awful sight revealed by the light of approaching day.

Streams of turbid, foaming water were rushing down upon the field from fresh breaks which followed each other in rapid succession, and stout indeed must have been the heart which could have regarded such a scene unmoved. Stout hearts we had among us, however, which were proven and found worthy that day.

Among the negroes, as in all other classes, are to be found those born to rule; Grandfather recognized and singled out these characters, secured their attention, and in a few sentences, short and to the point, represented to

them that their safety and that of us all, depended upon their obedience and prompt action. They gathered around him, in their helplessness, trusting implicitly in his judgment, receiving his rapid, comprehensive orders, which they carried out to the letter, with the help of the weaker vessels, who gladly followed in their lead, reducing the confusion to order, none too soon.

The house, being on the highest point of the plantation, was considered safe temporarily, and Grandfather and Grandmother went together to the quarters to comfort and reassure the old and sick and little children, and superintend their removal, with their bedding, clothing, cooking utensils, their chickens, and whatever could be hurriedly collected into wagons, to a part of the place situated in the hills, where Mr. Gunn, with a number of men, constructed, with the utmost haste, a very long, broad shed, with bunks along each side and a wide street through the center, called "The Camp."

All was soon in readiness, and great was the relief when the procession moved off, carrying the helpless ones with loads of provisions, and all things necessary for their comfort, Mammy Judy and her wagon-load of babies bringing up the rear, with tins rattling, gourds bouncing, children screaming, and bright-colored bed quilts flapping in the wind.

The animals were collected and carried to the hills in droves; astonished turkeys, chickens, ducks and geese were snatched from their roosting places, imprisoned in baskets, and carried off to the hills, their cackling and quacking mingling with the universal din.

The work progressed in hot haste, and when the sun rose, warm and bright, bringing courage and hope to fainting hearts, the scene took on a more cheery aspect, the comical side coming more and more to the front.

"Lord, Marster," said Austin, "ain't dis er pity, ain't dis er pity! If dat levee jes' only had er hilt out two mo' days, us would er been all right! Nummine — I *boun'* I'll be ready fer de nex' overflow, mun, ef I has ter staht on dat levee no sooner en dis water go offen us. I lay hit ain't er gwine ter ketch me wid my breeches down [unprepared] *no* mo'!"

Many were the ludicrous accidents, and shouts of laughter could be heard from these April-hearted children of Nature, as one after another would be jostled into the water, or a refractory sow raised her rasping voice in indignant protest at being routed from her bed of soft mud and forced, against her will, into a place of safety, with her squealing babies.

When Grandfather came in to dinner we were on a slowly diminishing island, and Mr. Gunn's house, on a smaller one, a half mile away, the hill, with the long shed and innumerable camp fires showing in the distance. Grandfather said he still hoped the yard would not go under, and if it did, the water must rise several feet before it would enter the house, so we were not to leave home, much to our delight, and we had high hopes that we were to step out of the door into the skiff, like others we read about, which hopes were fully realized by the next day, and for a time grave fears were entertained that the house would be flooded. We escaped that, but enjoyed the novelty of fishing from the galleries and rowing about the yard, and into the garden and orchard for fresh fruits and vegetables.

Hearing signs of distress in the nursery one morning, I looked in and saw Mammy with her apron over her head, rocking back and forth, and crying aloud, "Oh, what dat dey say! — de baby fall in de overflow! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! *How* come I let dat chile go walkin'

wid dem gals?" meaning Dorothy and Cornelia. The levee was not yet under water entirely, our place being flooded from what we called backwater from the swamp, and a bridge of planks was laid from the highway on the levee to our steps, supported between by logs in the water. Similar walks were constructed to the kitchen, which was what you could call a half block from the house, and other places in the yard, and one from the overseer's house to the levee. All too slight and insecure they proved, but when we were too weary of the house, we were allowed to walk on the highway, and Mammy had been persuaded to let Patty go. I tried to comfort her, but she was off before she could hear me, running like mad across the bridge, collecting an army of followers in her flight, until she met Jane, coming to meet her with Patty safe and dry in her arms. "*How* come you all tell me dat?" she cried when she could find her voice. "Tell you what?" asked Jane; "'tain't nobody tole you nothin' but *Gunn's* chile fell off de plank!" Mammy's contemptuous ejaculations were unspellable, and seizing Patty, she turned back, but Cornelia came running up, calling, "Oh, Mammy, *do* give her to Jane, and go with me to help poor Mrs. Gunn. You know what to do better than I do." "'Tain't nothin' ail her, I tell you, Missy,—dat chile done out de water gins' now—do her good, anyhow—nasty little so'-eyed po' white folks! I gwine ter take Patty home, an' you better come, too—gittin' yer dress all draggled up fer nothin'!"

"Better give Patty to me," said Torm, appearing on the scene and seeing Mammy's excited state of mind. "Git out er my way, nigger; 'tain't nobody gwine tech dis chile but *me,*—I don had skeer ernough. I notter gwine ter let her out er my sight *no* mo'—*move,* I tell yer!" And forgetting the caution that she constantly

impressed upon us, Mammy strode over the rickety bridge, becoming more nervous at each step. "O-o — e-e! Don't walk so close berhine me, Torm! O-o — e-e!" *Splash!* went the end of the plank off the rolling log, and down went our Mammy, yielding up the baby, and looking at Torm just in time to see him explode with laughter. All hands rushed to her assistance with genuine concern, but there was no real danger, the water being not nearly so deep and dark as Mammy's wrath, emphatically expressed, as, dripping dismally, she hurried out of sight around the side gallery.

In about fifteen days, we were left high and dry, having sustained much less damage than many of our neighbors, and in a few weeks things were going on as before, and our overflow was a thing of the past.

CHAPTER II.

A Visit to Melville Manor.

THE country was closely settled with substantial old homes, costly, elegant mansions, and simple, comfortable dwellings, among whose inmates friendships were inherited along with the family silver. Honor, refinement and pride of birth held precedence among us; wealth and display received no consideration whatever. Visits were of frequent or daily occurrence, when the weather was at all suitable, old and young coming and going, to call, spend a day or a morning, an afternoon or an evening, driving home eight or ten miles after tea. Social intercourse was cordial, affectionate and familiar, absolutely without form or ceremony, and yet the coming of "comp'ny" never failed to create a stir in the household. With flying feet and rolling eyes, the twins appeared in Grandmother's room, and each struggling to be first, they delivered themselves in one breath of the startling announcement: "H' yon come a ca'iage!" Instantly Grandmother was on her feet, and

reducing her movements by an effort to almost, but *not quite,* their usual dignified composure, she approached the bureau, smoothed her soft hair, examined her faultless collar critically in the mirror, and selected a clean handkerchief of suitable quality from her top drawer, issuing orders meanwhile: "Cely, call your Aunt Polly to me, and then run quickly and open the front gate. Nancy, pick up my scissors and thimble, and wind up the thread on my spool; pick up all these scraps from the carpet and sweep the hearth; they will come in here to take off their bonnets if they are going to spend the day; be quick, now — where's Torm? Where *is* Torm?" "Here I is, Mistis," answered Torm, coming on the run. "Torm, open up the parlor and see if the fire needs more wood." "Polly," as Mammy hurried in, "is there any cake in the house?" "De law, Mistis, dem chillun done et up de las' er de cake I made yistiddy, but I kin make some er dem little thin tea cakes, nice an' hot, gins' dey gits set down good." "Well, do, Polly; open a bottle of muscadine wine and empty it into a decanter; get the silver waiter and some wine glasses, and small napkins, and have Torm hand it in."

"Miranda," said Aunt Eunice, "wash Patty's face and hands and put a clean apron on her, and [in an undertone] *do* see that her nose is clean. Take the baby off; she's cross and sleepy."

The girls came from their room, vainly endeavoring to subdue the rustle of fresh toilets,—all followed Grandmother to the front door, Aunt Eunice holding clean, uncomfortable Patty with one hand, and some light sewing hastily picked up in the other, combining ease and cordiality in the welcoming smile.

Only the breeze rustled the leaves on the drive. "Cely, hasn't the carriage come to the gate yet?"

"Ya-as'um"—waiting—smiling. "Why, where is the carriage?" "Hit done pass on by!" "Hi!" said Mammy, peering in at the back door. "Ain't dey no comp'ny come yit?" All was explained, and Cely duly condemned.

"Mammy, did you make the cakes?" said little Patty. "De law bless de chile, dem cakes is er burnin'!" and Mammy rushed out, followed by Patty and the twins. "Git out er here, Cely! You allers up to *sump'n!* I'll ketch you, madam, an' I lay I'll choke yo' tongue out, mun! Git out er dis kitchen!" But Cely feasted on scorched cakes with the others. She was the moving spirit of the two, receiving most of the notice, complimentary and otherwise,—Nancy being a quiet, gentle, dull little thing, whom everybody loved when they happened to think about her.

The long, bright summer was a happy time at Penultima. School was out, and with deep sighs of relief, we cast away our books and gave ourselves up to the varied pleasures of the season. Picnics were joyful occasions to us then; collecting crowds of children from all over the neighborhood, we would take our lunch and go after blackberries for jam, but Grandmother's supply would have fallen far short of the demands of her great family if it had not been for the servants she sent to take care of us, and to do the work, while we ate the lunch and played in the woods and fields.

We had an abundance of fruit, and later in the season large baskets full were brought in and prepared in various ways for winter use. By the side of the path leading to the wash-house were three wide-spreading apple trees, and in their shade could be seen a little crowd of women, working under Mammy's directions, peeling and cutting the fruit, and cooking it in large brass kettles,

placed on bricks over the fire. Quantities of it were dried on long scaffolds in the hot sun.

Grandmother would walk out to them occasionally with some directions, and delight their hearts with a word of praise.

Absent children brought their friends home for vacation; relatives and friends in the neighborhood came to welcome them, and our big house was headquarters. There were no special entertainments, but a continuation of breakfasts, dinners and teas, with riding, driving and boating, playing and dancing, and singing, between times.

Grandfather and Grandmother had the reputation of being the most successful matchmakers in the country, which they stoutly denied, but the number of weddings following these seasons in the country was remarkable, and the boys did not fail to count them up, charging the old folks to be careful and leave to Heaven its proverbial duty of match-making.

The long galleries were cool, the hammocks and rocking chairs inviting, to say nothing of the deep, shady lawn, with its rustic seats here and there and everywhere —sometimes a smooth rock, a comfortable bend in the root of some enormous tree, or the long, soft, uncut grass.

The summer is long in our Southland, but it was hard to realize that it was past and gone, as one by one the guests bethought themselves of duties set aside for October. Reluctant were the farewells and quick the promises to come again next summer, or possibly Christmas.

"Bring me my little shawl, Miriam," Grandmother would say. "Autumn is in the air,—we cannot sit on the gallery many more evenings, but the sunset is too beautiful to leave." And long after the others had left us

alone, she would sit with my head in her lap, her dear hands fondling my hair, and talk to me of my father and mother.

"Grandmother," I said to her, "I heard Mr. Gunn say that my father was a *leveler*. He said the Colonel was mighty free with his money, and would do a poor man a good turn any time, when he got in trouble, but he had to reach *down* to do it; but young Donald was always right *with* a fellow, no matter *how* low down he got. *He* was a *leveler!* Grandmother, I thought you would be angry!" "No, my darling," she said; "why should I be angry? That ignorant man paid your dear father the highest compliment within his understanding. Donald was a true leveler. He was a nobleman after Nature's highest type; truth and charity emanated from his being, like rays from the sun; he indignantly repelled the idea of keeping the ignorant in their place, believing that their place should be elevated by earnest efforts of the more fortunate; he chose for his friends those upon whom he could bestow benefits. When he was a little child, your Grandfather has said to me, 'Miriam, can it be that our boy has low tastes?' and anxiously we watched his course, only to see that his nature was too pure to be contaminated." "Just like you! My dear, beautiful Grandmother!" I cried, pressing her hand to my face; and so Grandfather found us when he came for her, and together they took me in from the night, as they had taken me in from the cold world a few years before.

Soon the evenings grew dark and chill, the sparkling fires tempted us within,—we gathered around the hearth, and the happy summer was over. With but a passing sigh of regret, we turned our thoughts to the future,

more bright and beautiful than the past in our youthful imagination.

Twice a year, and oftener if occasion required, Grandmother visited her mother at Melville Manor, forty miles inland from Penultima. Grandfather attended to the management of her place, as she was very old and lived with her invalid son and two maiden daughters, a helpless and dependent family.

One morning near the end of October, I started up from a sound sleep with a vague feeling that something new and delightful was going to happen. What was it? What was the meaning of the hurried footsteps, resounding voices and general bustle and preparation? Why was Rachel, one of the younger maids, standing at my bedside with a candle in her hand, calling me to "Wake up, Missy! Hit's time ter git up"—at this hour of the night—or could it be morning? Where was Mammy? Where was Jane? "Mammy gittin' ready, an' Aun' Jane waitin' on Mistis. I *wisht* I was gwine wid yo'all," said Rachel. Finally it dawned upon me that we were going on a journey to Melville Manor. I was always Grandmother's companion, and this time Reggie and Donald were to go, too, much to my joy, and their own.

We went by private conveyance, and to accomplish the trip in one day, and have time for a long rest at dinner-time, we must start very early, and the boys and I were dressed and out betimes, in a perfect flutter of delight at the novelty of eating breakfast by candle light, watching the lanterns moving about the lot, and the carriage and buggy brought to the door in the grey dawn. The trunk was strapped on behind the carriage, carpetbags, baskets and bundles stowed away, and as the big, round, closely covered cheese-box of lunch was put under the seat, I looked at the boys, and they eyed

the box, and silently we congratulated each other upon the tempting prospect.

At last we were off, well wrapped up, the horses prancing in the chilly morning air; Grandfather taking the lead, with Grandmother in his buggy, and Uncle Rock driving the carriage with Mammy and ourselves, the boys taking turns riding outside with him. Our way led along the river road for the first four miles, when we turned abruptly to the hill country, almost encircling and keeping in view for many miles, La Vega, the home of Uncle Stuart McNeill, Grandfather's younger brother and our family doctor. The long, low buildings, with their broad latticed verandas and open colonnades, were scattered over three low-lying green hills a mile from the river, and showed up well against a rising, wooded background, the whole being conspicuous from the extensive, well-kept gardens, brilliant and beautiful for the greater part of the year.

Then we passed into the forest, beautiful beyond description in the October weather, over steep hills where we were glad to jump out and walk to relieve the tired horses; through plantations, and two villages or cross-roads, each with its post office, a dwelling or two, and a store, with a string of tin cups over the door, bunches of brooms tied together so they would stand alone, jars of red and white candy in the windows, and a man patiently waiting for customers. Then we came to Black River, a small stream scarcely worthy of so dignified a name, but which must be crossed on a ferry boat, and driving down the steep bank to the water's edge, Uncle Rock got out and, making a trumpet of his hands, he shouted like this,—"E—who—e—e—*e!*" He had to repeat his call several times before Mr. McNemara, the sleepy boatman, appeared in the door of his shanty on the other

shore, running his thumb under his one "gallus" and cramming his torn hat down to his eyes.

He stepped down the steep bank, unwinding a chain which held the flatboat to a stob driven deep into the mud, jumped aboard and pulled over to us by a rope stretched across the stream, which was low and narrow at this season. Fastening the chain to a stob on our side, he signified without a word that he was ready. We all got out of the carriage, and Uncle Rock drove the horses carefully on, was pulled across, and the boat, returning, carried over the buggy and horse, and all of us except Mammy, who always insisted upon going "when Rock went." Ever since her adventure in our overflow she was "skeered o' water," and did not enjoy the ferry as the rest of us did.

We were delighted when we had what the boatman called long ferriage in the spring, which, being double price, came early and remained late in the season. Silently he collected the toll, remembering his manners and Grandmother's presence, jerking off his hat when Grandfather dropped a cigar into his hand.

"Well, Rock," said Grandfather, "do you think we can make it to Grapevine Spring by twelve or half-past?" "Yes, sir, I'll try fer it," said Uncle Rock. "Dese chillun is er gittin' rampageous in here. Git ap, Jim and Brooklin! Ye mout es well have yer dinner and a drink yerse'f."

"Keep still, chillun," said Mammy. "I hope to de Lawd Mistis will git in here herse'f after dinner an' put one er two er you in de buggy; y'all done *lee*—ter—mo—ter was'e all my patience—git off er me! Hi! dere's de ole apple tree in de fiel' whar we gits apples every year, an' hit's full now—stop, Rock, an' let de chillun out." "Oh, I ain't got no time to be foolin' wid apples,"

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said Uncle Rock; "ain't ye got 'nuff t' eat in de box? Dey ain't none o' *your* apples, nohow — Whoa!" And we relieved Mammy of our restless presence for a few minutes, and came back loaded with mellow fruit, which kept us quiet for a time. But it was growing very warm; we were cramped and tired, and pretty soon Uncle Rock turned out into the woods where there was not a sign of a road, and down a short hill, suddenly coming in sight of the Grapevine Spring, numberless rills, flowing through crevices in the large, moss-covered rocks, which surrounded, and almost concealed, the spring, forming a charming little rivulet, running and gurgling over rocks and pebbles, delightfully cool and inviting, in the dense shade afforded by the great trees, supporting vines festooned from one to another, and bearing long clusters of the fruit from which the place took its name. We gladly got out of the carriage, and ran about the beautiful spot, quiet and secluded from the passerby; rabbits scurried here and there, and pretty gray squirrels waved their fluffy tails over their backs as, all unafraid and undisturbed, they pattered over the bright leaves, and raced up the tall trees, leaping among the branches, and swinging in the vines, as they looked quizzically down at us before darting into their holes to store, far out of harm's way, the cherished nuts, carefully collected for winter's use.

Uncle Rock unhitched the horses — Jim and Brooklin and Billy — gathered handfuls of hanging moss and rubbed them down carefully before he would let them have a drink, though they begged for it when they saw the tin bucket, rubbing their noses against him, and almost talking. "No, boys, not yit," he would say. "Ain't I done tell ye 'fore now, ye can't git no water while ye so hot? Keep quiet now and git cool while I

fix yer dinner,—wait, I tell ye! I'm er comin'. Dar, now, come up ter dis trough—dat is ter say, dis rock,—Hi, dere! not dat er way! Ye mus' think ye gwine ter eat wid yer mistis—Come here to me—now! here's yer fodder—here's yer corn. What,—ye won't eat? Jes' can't do it twel ye wet yer throats—Well, I'll hatter give ye a little bit—jes' a half a bucket apiece, to wash de dus' out yer throats. Hi, dere, Jim! Keep yer mouf out er Brooks' bucket—you allers *would* do dat—you's a mean hoss! Now, I reckon yer kin eat, dat's hit. Now, I'll go help Polly."

But we were not waiting for him. Mammy opened the cheese box and instantly I was plunged from this pinnacle of hope into the depths of grief and despair, as the certainty forced itself upon me that I had forgotten and left hanging upon the curtain rest in Grandmother's room, my dear little toy carpet-bag, its sides bulging and flap buttoned by such hard pulling, over the lunch I had prepared with such delight to surprise the boys! Oh, those hard-boiled guinea eggs—three of them!—the smallest, *cutest* things!—the biscuit and tea cakes cut out with Grandmother's thimble!—that molasses candy which Nervy said would be the whitest I had ever made if I would let her give it one good, hard pull for me, which I did, and she drew it out into long ropes, which she plaited and twisted and curlecued most beautifully; the little boxes of nuts, picked out with such labor and pains, and such terror of being discovered. My lamentations would not be repressed by the loving sympathy I received, but the base, ungrateful ridicule of the boys excited deepest satisfaction when I considered the loss they had sustained, and drying my tears, I answered Mammy's call for help. Prancing with delight, we gathered dry twigs and bark, and soon the camp fire was burning brightly;

the coffee pot was filled from the spring and set upon its trivet made of three rocks placed at the proper distances apart near the fire, and spreading a white cloth over some rocks and partly on the grass, Mammy set forth a feast which would have made you wonder if that box was enchanted. Ham and corn drop-cakes, broiled chickens and beaten biscuit, hard-boiled eggs, cheese and pickle, apple crab-lanterns and tea cakes. "Rock, git me a nice forked switch and sharpen de en's," she said. "You know Mistis don't love ham br'iled on de coals."

Dinner being over, Mammy took the carriage cushions, which had served as seats arranged around our rustic table, and selecting a warm, dry spot where the pine needles were knee-deep under a bright covering of autumn leaves, drifted high against the rocks, she formed a sleepy hollow where she said "Mistis could res' same as ef she was in her feather bed in de house." Calling us to bring her things from the carriage, Grandfather retouched her couch here and there with his own hands, drew the plaid shawl over her shoulders and placed the traveling pillow, with its brown linen case, under her head; then, refusing her offer of one of her cushions, he placed himself against the great rock beside her, lighted a cigar, and opening his new *Harper's,* he proceeded to rest and enjoy life, and we left them and sought amusement in our own way. "Uncle Rock," said Donald, "are the grapes ripe?" "Law, yes, chile, dey ripe dis time er year," said he, "but I dunno how ye gwine ter git 'em — dey dat high." "Why, Uncle Rock, can't you climb the tree?" innocently asked the little boy. "Now, jes' listen at dat!" and leaning over, the old man placed both hands carefully on his knees and laughed in his slow, peculiar way, until Donald thought he would never stop. "Hi, chile, I ain't been up a tree sense yer ma wus

born," he said, when he could speak. "I reck'n yo'all hatter git dem grapes yerse'f." And leading Jim up to the vine, he placed the boy on his broad back, where, standing firmly and grasping the vine in one hand, Donald gathered quantities of the purple bunches, and rode in triumph back to the spring, with Uncle Rock leading the horse.

Seeing Reggie in the water, with his trousers rolled above his knees, he promptly threw his grapes into Mammy's white apron and followed suit, walking carefully over the sharp pebbles.

"Oh, Grandmother!" I cried, running up the bank. "May I wade with the boys?" But the old folks were sleeping too peacefully to be disturbed, and feeling that I had done my best to get permission, I took off my shoes and stockings, and in I plunged, white ruffled pantalettes and all. My enjoyment consisted principally in being able to do whatever the boys did, and I was not sorry when we were called out to get ready to go.

How it was that the old darkies could wake up just when they wanted to, is a mystery to me to this day, but Uncle Rock, with his head bowed, his hands clasping his knees and holding fast to his hat, seemed to be sleeping soundly, but when two hours' nooning were over, he was up and putting the horses to the carriage.

"Marster," said he, "ef you 'lows ter git ter ole Mistis' house gins' dark, hit's time us wus a-movin'."

Reluctantly we made ready and were soon creaking on our way once more, enthusiasm and dinner all gone, and a warm, dusty way before us. But we changed about now, both of the boys going in the buggy, and Grandmother, taking a seat in the carriage, much to Mammy's relief, and my delight, beguiled the weary hours with stories of her childhood and what we would

see at Melville Manor,—and then—"Wake up, little daughter! Here we are," and it was night, and bright light streamed through the open door from a candle held high in both hands of Uncle Johnnie, the butler, a dapper little man, with white hair and apron, a soft voice and noiseless footsteps, who *alone,* to my surprise, received us at the door. At Penultima the butler's service would have been uncalled for, as every member of the family would have been on the steps, "rain or snow, hail or blow," with noisy welcome for the traveller.

But at Melville Manor a hush seemed to fall upon us as we entered. Uncle Johnnie placed the light on a table, and stepping quickly, he carefully closed the door, and then timidly folded and unfolded his small hands, until they were warmly grasped by both Grandfather and Grandmother in a hearty, hasty greeting, when, trembling with delight, the dear old man ushered us all into the sitting-room, where the gentle welcome, though it awed us into silence, seemed to satisfy our elders.

Grandmother Melville, in a cap of sheerest white muslin, with a box-pleated border of fine old lace falling lightly over her gray hair, and a kerchief of soft black silk folded on her bosom, occupied an easy chair—she never sat in a rocker—in the warmest corner, for it was cool again in the evening, and as the bright firelight flashed upon her square breastpin, enclosing its single lock of gray hair, and enormous gold-bound spectacles, I caught the gleam of tears, and whispered to Grandmother, "Oh, is she sorry we have come?" But she only held her close, and Uncle Howard called us to his seat opposite, where he and the Aunties welcomed us. Grandfather was splendid as he passed from one to another, and finally seated himself by the old mother's side, asking affectionately after the welfare of herself

and family. Grandmother's face was a picture of loveliness in her joy at this reunion with mother, brother and sisters in her old home. Soon she was called from the room to see some of the old servants,— the aunties resumed their seats and the gentle, well-mannered little buzz occasioned by our arrival subsided.

I looked around the large, old-fashioned room, with its low ceiling and dead white walls, hung with old portraits of stout, comfortable-looking gentlemen, with ruffled fronts and tremendous stocks, and slender, meek-looking ladies, with smooth hair and long hands and sharp-pointed bodices. Opposite the door was the fireplace, with its tall andirons, heavy shovel and tongs, and broad fender, the latter standing on six feet, of the lion's claw pattern, in which the toenails were distinctly marked, all of brightest brass, reflecting the firelight and sending it dancing with the utmost temerity and unseemly merriment over the old high-backed sofas which sternly faced each other from opposite sides of the room, planting their ponderous feet into the dark, large-figured carpet, in all the dignity of age, polished mahogany, and treacherous, forbidding hair-cloth; the six chairs of the same material which stood in a row at measured distances — three on each side of the door — and the round table which occupied the middle of the room, and held two candles in tall silver candlesticks, and four piles of books arranged so as to form a perfect square.

On the high, black mantel was a set of brass candelabra, with dangling, rainbow-hued prisms, which I thought the most wonderfully beautiful things I had ever seen, a double one exactly in the center, and smaller ones on each end; in the spaces between were most exquisite vases of rare old painted china. All stiff and uncompromising, but home and contentment for the quiet inmates,

GRANDMA MELVILLE

who would have considered a change in the position of a chair an unwelcome innovation. Out in the hall stood the tall old clock, towering far above Grandfather's head, with its white face and long hands, its picture of the moon in all its phases, and its fearsome inscription, "Time cuts down all, both great and small," ground in a semicircle in large letters in the glass door, which was large enough for Donald to step in. Uncle Johnnie had to stand on a chair to wind it up with a great clumsy key.

"Well, Mother Melville," said Grandfather, "how do you think Miriam is looking? Here she comes," and rising, he led her to her mother. "Isn't she as fine now, at fifty, as she was when you gave her to me, more than thirty years ago?"

"Well, son Donald," said Great Grandmother, "I will say I am pleased with Miriam's looks, and her establishment in life. You have done a good part by her."

Grandmother laughed, as he gravely bowed his acknowledgments of the compliment which she said he invited.

It was Grandfather's expressed wish that his wife should always be well dressed, and with her elegant form attired in a handsome, stylish traveling suit, her beautiful hair arranged after the fashion of the day, and her brilliant personality, she presented a striking contrast to her sisters, none the less dainty and delicate, but so severely simple in their clinging frocks of soft black wool, white kerchiefs meekly crossed in front and hair evenly parted and smoothly brushed, and decorated with high-top combs of delicately-carved and polished tortoise shell.

The door opened just wide enough to admit Uncle Johnnie's anxious face, and Aunt America hurried out to "'xamine de table." In a few minutes we were called

to tea, a very substantial meal in consideration of travellers' appetites, and served in the daintiest way in china of dark, somber blue, with knives and three-pronged forks of polished steel with ivory handles, and spoons with slender stems of a most extraordinary length, and bowls whose diminutive size was most tantalizing as a means of gratifying the hearty desires created in view of the bounties spread before us, though to measure a dose of bitters they would have been just the thing. Candles in brass candlesticks, under tall shades of clearest cut-glass, lighted and adorned the spotless table.

After tea, Mammy took us upstairs to the room which had been Grandmother's from the time she was first grown, and Mammy, a young girl herself, had slept on a pallet on the floor, to be near her young mistress. The room was low and the ceiling sloped down on each side; the floor was bare and polished, with bright rugs here and there. The bed was so high that we could not see up on it, until Mammy showed us the steps covered with carpet which were used to climb to bed! It had a decorated tester supported upon elaborately carved posts, and was closely curtained all around. The bureau was rounded in front, and the drawers were furnished with heavy brass handles. It stood upon very long legs, which extended all the way to the high top, and were carved to match the bed-posts. A tiny little glass, swinging on a curious cabinet of drawers, with miniature brass handles, was placed on top.

"Are we all going to sleep in one bed, Mammy?" I asked. But she raised the white fringed counterpane, which hung down to the floor, and pulled out a trundle bed for me, and said the boys were to sleep in one just like it in Uncle Howard's room, opposite.

I lay awake a long time, having slept in the carriage in the afternoon, watching the shadows on the wall, and trying to imagine Grandmother looking like that picture hanging above the high mantel, of a school-girl, with long hair plaited down her back, a *very* short dress, and *very* long pantalettes.

Great Grandmother always washed the silver and glasses, and the delicate cups and saucers at the table, and I watched very curiously next morning after breakfast, as Uncle Johnnie made the large preparations for the small job. First a small, low table was placed beside her, with the cedar noggin filled with very hot water; a bowl on a waiter before her held the first water to remove the grease. Two mops, made of coarse homespun thread, soap and clean towels were brought, and the washing and rinsing and polishing soon left a glittering array for Uncle Johnnie to dispose of.

Aunt America bustled about the kitchen, storeroom, smokehouse and dairy. Aunt Ann was busy at something better suited to her strength, or want of strength, and Grandmother tried to keep up with all at once, questioning, suggesting, and interested in everything.

Grandfather took Uncle Howard for a long drive about the place, suggesting changes, and improvements, and making plans for their comfort and convenience during the coming winter.

Scaly barks did not grow on the river, and wishing to secure a supply from the abundance at Melville Manor to take home with us, the boys and I "took to the woods." Grandmother went with us as far as the quarters, to see Aunt Phillis, Uncle Rock's mother, who was very old and helpless, but always wanted to see Miss Miriam and her children, and she was never neglected. Finding a safe guide and a gang of little companions with baskets

for the nuts, she sent us on our way, returning to the house herself, where we followed in a few hours, laden with nuts, grapes, persimmons, paw-paws, black haws, muscadines, brilliant autumn leaves, and buckeyes. Feeling lost without Mammy, we searched and found her in the loom-house, superintending the work of cutting and making winter clothing for the negroes. Every available seamstress on the place was called to "de great house," and well I remember the busy scene.

Aunt Merea, seated on a high bench in front of the great loom, sent her shuttle flying with a rhythmic click-ety-bang-bang, to a running accompaniment of whirring spinning wheels, and the clock reel, which never failed to give me a start, though I was on the lookout for the loud snap, which indicated that one cut had been wound. Mammy stood at a long table, piled with bolts of goods, wielding an enormous, dangerous-looking pair of shears, with which she rapidly reduced the confusion to order, in the shape of a row of neat bundles, which must be marked with the name of the proposed wearer, and then turned over to the group of white-clad women, who surrounded her, and formed her corps of able assistants. Steel thimbles with open ends, enormous needles, balls of coarse thread, and lumps of yellow bees-wax were distributed, and they set to work in earnest, occasionally appealing to "Sis' Polly" for advice, which was delivered with the condescending, but kindly, manner always employed by house servants towards "de fiel' han's."

Life at Melville Manor must have been very dull and monotonous, but the month we spent there was full of happiness for old and young. We did not rush through life as you do these days, and Grandfather, after attending to the gathering and disposing of the crops, repairing buildings and fences, and setting the plantation to rights,

as he did with such interest and energy, had plenty of time each day to devote to social enjoyment. Being so much out in the world among men and things, he introduced an element of life into the quiet family, like fresh air into a close room, and they looked for these visits as events in their lives. With Grandmother, he received and visited the friends of thirty years before, when as a young man he lingered around the old manor, which, being the home of three young ladies, was bright and gay enough then, and sheltered the charm and hope of his life.

Uncle Rock and Mammy were happy in being restored to the home, family and friends of their childhood and young days, and being relieved from the daily routine of work, though they made themselves useful in many ways.

The beautiful weather continued late in the season, and we children made the most of our holiday, spending the greater part of the days in the woods. Each hour possessed its own peculiar charm, but I recall the long evenings, passed with our elders and listening to their talk of old times, with the keenest delight. I never could endure the much-poetized "twilight hour," and watched Uncle Johnnie's preparations for the evening with deep satisfaction. He came with never-failing regularity, and taking the tongs, he pulled the sticks forward on the andirons, and stirred the red-hot coals, sending millions and millions of sparks rolling and snapping in a tumultuous uproar, far into the black depths of the great old fireplace, a brilliant display, we never tired of watching; then he hurried out, leaving the door ajar, and quickly returned with the big "back-log," which he placed carefully in position, followed it up with many smaller ones, and then drawing out the chunks with the tongs, he laid

them on top of the great pile, talking care never to reverse the ends, which was *bad luck,*— they must burn to ashes in as nearly as possible the same position in which they were first placed upon the fire. Then he swept, and swept, and *swept,* until the unoffending ashes, flying in the slight draught, as though vainly endeavoring to elude his pursuing broom, were driven far back of the andirons,— then, and not until then, he replaced the broom and, folding his hands in a manner altogether peculiar to himself, he glanced around the room.

"Let us have the candles, Johnnie," Uncle Howard would say, and then the magazine and the paper were produced, read aloud and discussed. Aunt Ann got out her knitting, and Grandma came in after her nap.

"Oh, Aunt Ann!" I said one evening, "please teach me to knit. I want to knit Mammy a pair of gloves." "Yes, darling, I will," she said, "but you must make something simpler before you undertake to widen and narrow and rib. How about some suspenders, or a blanket for your kitten?" "A blanket for Glossy! Oh, yes! I'll try that!" I said, and ran to find a ball of red yarn and some needles. "Glossy is yellow, and how beautiful a red blanklet will look on her!" Dear Auntie! — how she laughed at my enthusiasm, and helped and encouraged me, picking up dropped stitches and knitting off the needle, which would become almost immovably fixed by my tight, irregular work. By repeated efforts I completed a square of six inches, soiled and streaked with rust from the long-neglected steel needles, but Glossy had grown to be a big cat, and scorned her blanket. I loved to sit on the little green stool at her feet and work, and to relieve the monotony of knitting, she cut out of stout, fine linen, home-spun and home-woven, a rag doll, basting and fitting the parts

as carefully as she would have done a dress for the queen, — else how could she teach me to be careful, she said, and I stitched and turned and stuffed, with delighted interest and much help, until Miss Thusa stood on her feet with assistance, in a pair of blue knitted stockings, cloth gaiters, a dark calico dress and a yellow calico sunbonnet, which well became her calm, white face. Aunt Ann made sets of clothes for her and packed them in a prune box with a glass top, under which was pasted a bright picture. She had night-gowns and ruffled nightcaps which I had much trouble in tying under her receding chin. Owing to her strong constitution and firm, well-regulated character, Miss Thusa was able to resist such vicissitudes as the cat, the dog, and the boy; suffered alternations of neglect and attention, starvation and overfeeding, exposure and close confinement, endured life among us for many years, and contemplated, untouched, the rise and fall of many generations of her kind.

Grandma made housewives, or "hussifs," as they were called for short,— a strip of ribbon, silk, or other material, eighteen inches long and four inches wide, rounded at the top and square at the bottom, covered with pockets, the lower one being quite full, so as to hold a spool of thread, a thimble, a ball of darning cotton, and a piece of wax; the others for papers of needles, skeins of sewing silk, bunches of bobbin and braid, and such odds and ends as collect and litter one's work basket. The whole was finished with a narrow binding, a few flannel leaves, neatly rounded and notched, tacked across the bottom for needles and pins, and a half-yard of narrow ribbon folded in the middle and tacked to the top, to tie around it when it was rolled up. Every known member of the family was supplied with a hussif, and yet the supply seemed unequal to the demand.

CHAPTER III.

Stories Grandma Told.

As she sewed, Grandma became reminiscent and told us stories, often suggested by the materials she used, which were saved for years, sometimes, until they met their match. "Miriam," she said to Grandmother one evening, "your description of the overflow last spring put me in mind of the time your father and I were lost in the high water, soon after we came from Virginia — let me see — that was more than sixty years ago." Instantly six eyes were fastened upon her, for we were as eager for stories then as you are now, and Grandmother laughed and said, "Now, Mother, you are getting yourself into trouble." But Grandma said, "Oh, my time is not very valuable now; I can afford to give it to them the little while they are with me." And, thus invited, we gathered around her.

"Yes, it was more than sixty years ago," she began, "long before your Grandmother was born. It was a very sickly season and your Great Grandfather was just

recovering from a long, serious attack of fever, when we heard that his brother's wife was at the point of death, over in the swamp. The waters were up, everywhere, and it was a great undertaking to go even a few miles, especially in his weak state, but my husband was not to be dissuaded from his purpose, and go to Sister Sarah he would, or die trying, he said. Of course, I went with him, and we thought once that we would all 'die trying.' We had to go in the carriage from here to the river, which was out of its banks and extended all through the low country. We expected to cross the water in two or three hours, and thinking the worst of the trip was over when we had accomplished the drive of eighteen miles, I made my husband comfortable with a large shawl and pillows, arranging the seats in the skiff, so he could lie down, and with a small bottle of wine and few wafers to refresh him on the way, we pulled out, expecting to dine at your Uncle's.

"It required many days to hear from them, in the existing state of the country, and we were very anxious, wondering if we would find Sister Sarah living. It looked very strange, going in a boat all among the trees and woods, but the guide laughed at my fears, saying that he had been over to the hills on the other side, and back, until he knew his way in the water as well as on the dry road. 'But how can you?' I asked. 'Water is all alike.' 'You see, Mistis,' he said, 'I blazes my way; I cuts chips out de trees.' 'I don't see any cuts,' I said, doubtfully. 'No, ma'am, not yit, but you'll see my blazes atter while,— I *knows* de way 'long here.' 'Don't croak, Dorothy,' said my husband; 'I think this is delightful, — so much pleasanter than jolting in the carriage; I feel better already; Dangerfield knows the way.' *Dangerfield!* What an ominous name, I thought, but I

cheered up, and looked about me, enjoying the novelty. My husband slept for a long time, and the guide rowed and said not a word. It grew dark and chill, and my spirits fell. 'Is night coming on?' I said, when I could stand it no longer. 'Oh, no, ma'am, hit's jes' dark in de woods,' said Dangerfield. 'We'll git dar to'reckly. You see dat openin' in de woods ahead?' But we went on, and on, and no opening appeared; and, watching the man's face, I could see that he was anxious and trying to appear unconcerned.

"I called my husband, fearing he would take cold, and gave him wine and wafers. I could see that he was startled when he looked at his watch. 'Dangerfield, we ought to be almost there,' he said; 'where are we now?' 'God knows, Marster, for I don't,' said the negro, dropping his oars. 'De water done riz 'bove my blazes an' I dunno whar we is!'

"We had been hoping against hope, and all gave up at once. It was growing very dark, and becoming entangled in the growth, we came to a stop. Catching the vines in his hands as he stood up in the boat, my husband endeavored to help Dangerfield pull through where he could not use the oars, and in doing so dislodged a snake, which fell at my feet! It was the 'last straw,' and I gave up all control of self and screamed and cried aloud. I was very silly, and am ashamed of my behavior to this day, but then and there your Grandfather showed what he was. He took me in his arms and soothed me as a mother would, calling me by every endearing name, unjustly reproaching himself for bringing me into such danger, and encouraging me to hope for deliverance. I think my playing the baby did old Dangerfield good. He took up his oars and pulled with a will, begging me not to cry. 'We 'bleeged ter git *some*-whar,' he said.

But for three days and nights, children, we travelled around in a circle, with nothing to eat and suffering from the cold.

"As hope died within my heart, I became perfectly calm, and taking our handkerchiefs from our pockets, I tied them as conspicuously as possible around our necks, in order that we might be identified by the names distinctly marked on each; and, feeling that there was nothing more for me to do, I nestled close into my husband's arms and prayed to be taken *first,* that I might not see him suffer and die.

"As night approached, our dreadful situation became appalling. Frogs croaked, owls hooted in the most dismal way, and alligators came out on logs and flapped their tails and opened their huge jaws almost in our faces. Out of the darkness on all sides came the most frightful cries of animals more or less vicious, we did not know. I crouched in the bottom of the boat in abject terror, and my husband ordered Dangerfield to pull up on one of the ridges which we often encountered, not more than four or five feet wide, and build a fire, hoping to keep wild beasts at a distance. Being a great smoker, he was supplied with matches, and splitting pieces from one of the seats in our boat to kindle with, we soon had an enormous fire of logs and branches. The light brought fiery, glaring eyeballs into view from all directions, adding horror to my fright, but Dangerfield said they always looked so when there was a light in the woods at night.

"We kept up the fire until daylight, and when the sun rose bright and clear, we saw a column of smoke, in which we recognized our salvation. We all broke down and cried aloud, falling on our knees together, and thanking God.

"With weak arms, but strengthened hearts, we made our way towards that smoke, even *I* trying to help pull with my hands against trees and vines. My husband was well-nigh exhausted when we came in sight of a house, which proved to be the home of one of your Uncle's neighbors, and we barely succeeded in letting it be known that we were in distress, before we all collapsed and had to be carried into the house, where we met with untold kindness and attention; in fact, we would have been killed with kindness in the shape of too much food, but for the interference of a young doctor, providentially detained in the house, who carefully and skillfully directed the proper treatment and brought us back to life by degrees. We learned of Sister Sarah's recovery, and our brother came to us immediately and took us to his home as soon as we were able to be moved."

"I think that is finer than any story book I ever read," said Donald, "but Grandmother says you know about real Indians — *fighting* Indians, I mean; I *think* she said you had seen them, and — Oh, Grandma, *won't* you tell us about them?" And Donald looked fearfully at the door as it slowly opened, but it was only peace-loving Uncle Johnnie, and Aunt America said supper was getting cold, but Grandma promised that she would think of something for the boys before the next evening.

"Nancy," she said, when the time came, "do try to think of something for me to tell the children." Dear Aunt Ann was always interested in anything to give us pleasure, and declared that she knew of nothing which we would enjoy so much as an account of Grandma's journey out to this country from Virginia, many years

ago. "*That* story has Indians in it," she whispered to the boys.

"Well, children," said Grandma, "your Aunties and your Grandmother have heard about my home-coming until they are tired of it, so you come here to me, and let them all sit over on that side of the fire and talk to the gentlemen." Gladly we pressed close to her side, and in a low, confidential voice, intended only for our ears, she began:

"We came here to Melville Manor soon after we were married, and that was when I was fifteen, — sixty-five years ago. My husband wanted to leave me in old Virginia with his mother, while he came and built me a house, and got started making a living, but I would not be left. Some of our negroes were here, had made a beginning towards cultivating the place, and built some log cabins, and I said if the cabin would shelter him, it would shelter me. 'But, Dorothy,' he said, 'I have to go through the Indian Nation on horseback, and sometimes may have to fly for my life.' 'Well, your life is my life,' I said. 'I won't stay.' 'But the baby — how can he stand it?' 'If the Indians get his father, he had better go, too,' I persisted, with a hardihood which I came near repenting on one occasion, which I shall tell you about, if not many others.

"I did come with my husband, riding much of the way behind him on a pillion, with my baby in my lap, he parting the cane with his hands to make a way for us. Sometimes I went inside one of the three covered wagons we had along with us, carrying our effects and some of the servants; others rode on mules. We boasted quite a cavalcade, and were not attacked by Indians on the way, but we had trouble with them quite often while I lived in my little cabin, which is Aunt Phillis' house now, and

which I love as my first real, own home. They were very troublesome, killing hogs and sheep and chickens, and stealing everything that was left out of the house; and once they came when I was alone in the cabin with the baby, and Phillis washing in the yard. There were three of them, and I could tell that they were drunk, which sent terror to my soul. There was no time for me to leave the house, so I called Phillis from the little high window in the back, and she flew for dear life to the field for the men. But it was some distance, and, taking my baby in my arms, I undertook to argue with them and hold them off until the men could reach me.

"They were frightful to behold, in their paint and feathers, and furious in their demands for whiskey. I had a barrel full, hidden under bedding and clothing in the room, but dared not give it up, knowing the maddening effect it would have. The Indians could not talk distinctly, but I managed to understand that they threatened to kill me and dash my baby's brains out against a tree if I would not give them 'fire-water.' They were easily frightened and made off when they found that help was at hand, and gradually ceased their troublesome depredations."

"Did they hurt the baby?" I asked, breathlessly. "Oh, dear, no; they came so close that he tried to pull the bright-colored feathers out of their heads, but he came through the experience safely, and there he sits laughing at you now." "Uncle Howard? Oh, Uncle Howard! Was *he* the baby?" we all cried, running to him to touch him and make sure that he was alive after having passed through such a scene. "Grandma," said Reggie, "why didn't you shoot the Indians when they came to your house? I wish *I* had been there. I would have killed them all three; that is the finest story I ever

heard in my life! What a journey that was for a lady to take!" "Yes, children," said Grandma, "it was a memorable journey, but when my sister and her husband went to housekeeping, they went twelve hundred miles up the river in a keel boat.

"We were six sisters," continued Grandma, "and four of us married our cousins, three of whom were Hairstons. Our father was Peter Hairston and our mother, Miriam Tate. We had eight brothers. When Miriam, our youngest sister, married Nicholas Hairston, they planned to go at once to his home in Crawford County, Arkansas, but after spending ten days with our mother, which she insisted upon, the river was found to be too low for steamboats, and no hope of a rise for months. Nicholas was anxious to get to his plantation, so he asked Miriam if she would take the trip with him in a keel boat. It was a distance of twelve hundred miles by water from our nearest river town, and he represented to her that it would be a long, tiresome journey, and subject to many discomforts; but the idea possessed the charm of novelty to her, and she eagerly consented, so he bought a nice, new keel boat, had a cabin fitted up in the stern for their private use, and furnished with a berth, table, chairs, their little hair-covered, brass-nailed trunks, and a shining new stove. Father and Mother loaded the boat with everything in the way of household goods they could possibly carry, a cook and other servants, furniture, provisions, and every luxury the city afforded, for their long trip. They employed an experienced guide, but the boat was manned by their own slaves, there being enough to relieve each other at the oars, so that the work would not be too hard. And so, with many tears, we bade them farewell, feeling that they were going to another world, but their

hearts were full of love and hope as they launched out upon a new era in their lives. The oarsmen rowed slowly up the river, waking weird echoes from the vast forests on either side, as they sang with musical but most uncanny intonation,—'Row, boatmen, row; row, boatmen, row! Rain or snow, hail or blow, here we go, a-sailin' up de river of de O-hi-o!' keeping time with the dripping oars as they dipped into the water, propelled the boat, and fell heavily into the oarlocks.

"They tied up in the evening for the negroes to camp, catch fish, and do their cooking, as the boat was not large enough to accommodate so many. They met with no adventures more serious than getting stuck on logs, or slipping head-foremost into the water, to rise again with the utmost unconcern. My sister kept a diary, which she sent home for us all to read. They reached Cairo just in time to see the steamer United States leaving.

"Miriam had never seen a steamboat, and was delighted with her grand, majestic movements, but she ran upon a bar before they were out of sight, and they left her ignominiously stuck in the mud. They had a skiff attached to the stern, in which they would occasionally take a row all by themselves, run far ahead of the boat, and get out on a planter — a large log in the water — and wait to be taken on again. The water was so low that the men had to use poles sometimes to push across a sand-bar, and once they had to resort to cordelling,— that is, the men formed a line on the sand beach with a cable running over their shoulders, and attached to the bow, and pulled the boat through the shallows. Sometimes they were mistaken for traders, as they landed at the settlements, and people would flock to the boat to make purchases.

"One day was the same as another on board the keel boat, and a little thing happened to Miriam which Nicholas teased her about as long as he lived, but being of a very conscientious turn of mind, she made a serious matter of it and never got over it. She undertook to make a pair of trousers for one of the men who was much in need, and when she put in the last stitch, late one evening, she found she had been sewing all day Sunday! She wept bitterly, refusing to be comforted. 'Yes, I know I *forgot,*' she said, 'but, oh, Nicholas! the commandment says, "*Remember* the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."'

"When they reached Kedron, a little settlement at the mouth of Kedron Creek, they ran aground, and could get no farther, being still a hundred miles from home. They remained on their boat, with two or three servants, and sent the men home on foot through the Cherokee Nation to bring horses and saddles for them to continue their journey. There were no roads, but Indian trails, only as wide as a spade, where they rode Indian file, one after the other, through the Nation, spending the nights at missions, or wherever they could find shelter. They encountered Indians many times during their whole trip, and while riding through the Nation. Twenty thousand Indians passed by in a body on their way to their acquired territory, which was moved up the country just at that time. It was an imposing sight, and frightful, too, but they were not interfered with, and reached home safely just before Christmas, having journeyed for ten weeks. There was a rise in the river the next month, and they were able to send for their boat, which they left at Kedron, and bring home all their possessions. They lived in that country for three years, making many friends, and enjoying the

novelty, but at the end of that time they came back to the old home, where they lived and died. I have something which belonged to my sister, and to our mother before her, which I intend to give your Grandmother for you, Miriam, since it is marked in your name, and I may as well get it now." And Grandma searched for keys in her enormous pockets. She wore one on each side under her skirt, which had openings to admit her hands, and many were the lumps of sugar, tea cakes and other goodies we have had from those inexhaustible depths, to ease a bumped head or a cut finger.

"Oh, Grandma," I said, "are you going to open the *corner press?* And may we see in it?" "Yes, come with me," she said, and as we left the room we heard Grandmother say, "Sister Ann, do you remember that there was ever a time when Mother would have let *us* into her corner press?" They laughed, and we followed Grandma into her own room, and watched with the keenest interest while she carefully unlocked and opened the doors of a mahogany cabinet, disclosing a set of brass-handled drawers, one of which she opened, and took out a box. "Now, we will go back to the sitting-room," she said. "Yes; but, oh, Grandma, *what* is that? And that? And *that?*" cried we all in a breath. And so, she showed us her treasures,—miniatures in gold settings, old letters and papers, paintings and embroideries, pieces of old jewelry, so curious now; a silver knitting sheath in the form of a fish, to fasten to the side like a breastpin; a silver sheath to fit the finger like a ring, broad on top, with finest ridges to catch the thread as it was drawn out in sewing, and prevent cutting into the delicate flesh; a silver butterfly on a stem which screwed to the table, and being pressed in the rear would open its mouth, to close firmly when released

upon the work, holding it smoothly while a long seam was stitched up, or a ruffle hemmed. Silver birds were made and used in the same way. Sewing machines were unknown in those days. A daintily embroidered infant's robe of finest cambric, which her baby, Miriam, my Grandmother, had worn when Grandfather took them to the city to meet Lafayette, and the great General had taken her in his arms and kissed her. Also the dress which Grandma herself had worn upon the memorable occasion,—of figured lavender silk, with very narrow skirt, very short waist, and very tight sleeves with enormous puffs at the shoulders, which had been filled with *feathers* to make them stand out.

With difficulty we managed to contain our curiosity, as Grandma slowly unrolled what seemed to be yards and yards of tissue paper, finally bringing to light a piece of her mother's wedding dress of white satin, and also a piece of purple satin left of the second day's dress; both came from Paris, cost a hogshead of tobacco a yard, and were so thick and stiff they would stand alone. In the purple satin, she appeared at her infair, a grand dining given her by Madam Washington at Mount Vernon, which was so near her home that the families frequently walked to visit each other, being intimate friends for many years.

"Here is what I intend for you, Miriam," she said, "and I might as well give it to you now." "Now, Grandma," said both the boys, "you give everything to Miriam just because she's *named* Miriam. Give us something." "Well, I will," she said, "but you boys do not care for a pincushion and scissors, do you?" And she pulled out a silver hook, arranged to fasten securely in the belt, with two silver chains, about a foot long,

attached to it. One was divided near the end and fastened to a pair of scissors, and the other held a silver band about as large as a bracelet, in which was tightly fitted a round ball pincushion, faded and moth-eaten, but which, she said, had been covered many times. On the hook were engraved the initials 'M. T. H.'

"Now, children, listen to me," said Grandma. "I have a story to tell you about this chain. Young men in old times were as venturesome and hard-headed as they are now, if not worse, and my father was a young man once. He belonged to a set, called the 'Swell Heads,' and I think he must have been the captain and leader, as he was always noted for daring deeds. But he had some experiences which sobered him to some extent, and one of these experiences is connected with this chain. He presented it to his wife soon after their marriage, and she wore it constantly, after the fashion of the day. He took her to drive behind the fastest horse he could find, and coming to a bridge, she begged to get out and walk over. 'Why?' he asked. 'Because I am afraid,' she answered. He straightened himself up in the most self-important, offended way — I have often heard him describe it — and asked her if she was afraid to trust herself with him! 'No,' she said; 'if you are willing to kill me, I *want* to die!' Assuring her that there was no danger, he proceeded to dash over the bridge. The wheel struck the low railing, which gave way. My mother was thrown out and hung over the deep water, securely held to the bridge by these little scissors attached to her belt, until her remorse-stricken lord could stop the frightened horse and fly back to her rescue.

"And, now, here is an ivory snuff-box for Reggie, and a watch chain for Donald, both of which belonged

to my Grandfather." "Oh, Grandma! They are fine! Thank you, ma'am," said the boys. "We will keep them as long as we live, but the stories are the finest of all — that one was almost as good as an Indian story."

"Come," said Grandma, "that is all." And together we went to show our treasures to Grandmother. She was so pleased that Grandma had given her the chain pincushion for me — she said she had wished for it ever since she could remember.

An old yellow paper dropped out of the box, and, opening it, Aunt Ann said: "Oh, Mother, here are those ridiculous verses James Hogan wrote and published in his paper when old Uncle Peter and Aunt Rachel were married!" "I thought I had lost them," said Grandma; "do read them to the children, and I will tell them about the wedding, ashamed as I am of my ancestor's folly."

Aunt Ann read aloud:

"Never Despair

"Listen, ye single gentlemen,
And ladies gay and fair,
Push on in courtship's pleasant road,
And see you don't despair.

"Tho' Cupid still should play coquette,
And lead you here and there,
The case we publish just below
Says plainly—*Don't Despair.*

"So, go ahead—'Tis good advice,
We have kind wishes plenty
For the friends who marry at eighty-one
As well as those at twenty."

"MARRIED

"On Tuesday, the 13th instant, Mr. Peter Hairston, of—— County, aged eighty-one years, to Mrs. Rachel Tate Gray, aged eighty years and six months. The parties were schoolmates sixty-four years ago, were lovers at twenty, and at eighty-one were married."

"Yes, children," said Grandma, "it is actually true. My father's uncle, Peter Hairston, and my mother's aunt, Rachel Tate, were lovers when they were school children; he went to the war, was taken prisoner and held for four years. She, thinking he was dead, married a Mr. Gray, who died after living with her sixty years and having a large family. Uncle Peter was devoted to his Colonel, nursed him through his last illness, and accepted the gift of his beautiful daughter, proffered on his death-bed. He made her a good husband, but in less than a year after she died he came back to his old Rachel, and they were married, as the paper stated. They went to his home after the marriage, and as they entered the room, the old clock, which had not run for years, struck *one*—waited an hour, and struck *two,* and never could be made to run again. The old couple seemed quite happy for one year, and then she pined for her children and they started to visit her daughter, but Uncle Peter was taken so ill on the way that he could not travel, and told her that she must go on without him, if she *must* go, and, to her shame be it told, she *left* him and went on to her daughter. She was taken sick and died in a few days, but he recovered and lived one year, when he also died, two years after the marriage, just as the old clock seemed to prophesy, though, of course, that had nothing to do with it. That's all," said Grandma, "and I hope that none of my

descendants will ever follow the example of these two old people, who, I think, must have been in their dotage."

And now our visit to Melville Manor was drawing to a close. Grandfather must see to his business; Grandmother was needed at home, to say nothing of Mammy, and we children had had holiday enough. Uncle Rock said "hog-killin' time was comin'"—he must see that the hogs were properly prepared, and we must *all* get ready for Christmas, which was now only a month off. So a day was set for our departure, and Uncle Rock came up before it was light to make the fire. "How is the weather, Rock?" asked Grandfather, sleepily. "Do you think we can get off?" "Well, Marster, de weather ain't none o' de bes', but hit's bettern it's gwine ter be. I think ef we don't go terday, we'll wisht we had," and so we said a mournful good-bye, the big cheese-box was packed by Aunt America's care, and we drove off in a dismal drizzle. The sun came out by fits and starts, but we had some rain, and it was cold. Uncle Rock buttoned on his leather front, with its funny little window and holes for the reins to come through. We closed our windows, and I put on Miss Thusa's sack and hugged her close, as I cuddled up to Mammy, with a delightful feeling of security, as I watched the raindrops patter on the glass, and Grandmother congratulated herself that we were getting over these roads before they became heavy. The novelty soon wore off, and I was glad enough to see the sun about twelve o'clock.

The Grapevine Spring was not as attractive as it was a month before, and being low and damp, we did not drive down to it, but Uncle Rock managed to make a little fire by the roadside to boil coffee, and we ate lunch crowded up in the carriage. We got along slowly after lunch, and were all delighted to see the lights of

La Vega in the distance. It was dusk when we passed, and we could not make out some dark objects, which Uncle Rock said were the shanties of the levee hands, who were camped there — the lowest class of white men.

"Missy," said Mammy, "kin you see de trunk out er dat back winder? I ain't got no confidence in dese yer po' white folks — we nigh in Hollytree Gap."

"Oh, Mammy, what do you mean?" I said, feeling scared. "Oh, nothin', honey — nothin', only I jes' thought 'bout de trunk out berhine. What's dat?" And I looked just in time to see a tattered hat and a red flannel sleeve through the glass, when I dropped, speechless, in my seat. But *Grandmother* was not speechless — no, indeed! Tapping sharply on the window, she opened it quickly, just as the trunk disappeared. "What do you mean, sir?" she called. "Stop, Uncle Rock!" And Uncle Rock jumped down, took up the small trunk, which the fellow had dropped in his flight, and putting it up in front by him, we hurried on, overtaking the buggy just before we came in sight of home. Now we could see lanterns bobbing about, and knew they had caught sight of our carriage lamps. The great gate flew open before we reached it, and shouts of "Dere dey come! Howdy, Marster! Howdy, Mistis!" were cordially answered. The tired horses plucked up courage in happy anticipation of their comfortable accommodations, and rolled us rapidly to the house. Light streamed from wide doors and windows, and when the carriage door was opened and the folding steps let down, a seat of interlaced arms appeared, and with an arm around the neck of each of her big boys, Grandmother was carried safely up the wet steps and into the hall, where I was quickly placed beside her. As I passed through the hall and into the rooms, great vases and

jars and banks of chrysanthemums appeared in every nook and corner, greeting me with their brightness and beauty, and the fresh, penetrating, delightful perfume, the memory of which, lingering in my mind, ever singles out this one night, and brings vividly back to me my happy home-coming.

We found ourselves in the midst of an uproarious welcome, from Aunt Eunice and the girls, and Miss Hale, the boys, the babies, and the black friends. The boys took possession of their mother, and the girls hovered around their father.

"Hi, Marster, you is wet!" said Torm, as he seized Grandfather's overcoat to remove it. "Oh, no; just a little damp," he answered. But Grandmother had not failed to take the alarm, and was feeling his knees and shoulders. Dorothy went to make a toddy, and Torm knelt to tug at his heavy boots. "Old boy, I'm glad to see you," said Grandfather, patting the woolly head. "Oh, these slippers feel good! What is so comfortable as an old shoe? Miriam, isn't it grand to be home again?" And he sipped his toddy with Hardie on his foot.

"What is that about your trunk?" he said, indignantly, as he heard the children talking excitedly. "Why, my brave woman, I am afraid you were imprudent. The fellow might have been impertinent. I should never have left you so far behind, but I drove on without a thought of danger in our quiet old neighborhood. It is exasperating, but there is nothing to be done with that class of people. They are a necessary evil — the levee work must be done, and we are not willing to expose the health of our people to such a risk."

Nervy unfastened my cloak and hood and admired Miss Thusa, saying, "Come on, Missy, me an' Rachel

got somethin' fer yer," and I went into the dining-room, closely followed by Cely and Nancy, who stuck to me until I said, "Bring in Miss Thusa's trunk (the prune box), get out her night-gown and cap, undress her and put her to bed." And so I left her with her delighted nurses, while I examined and went into ecstacies over three dear little baby rabbits, which pined and died after delighting my heart for a few days, in spite of constant attention and plenty of cabbage leaves.

"Oh, Nervy," I cried, all at once, "did you find my lunch?" "Law, yes, honey," she answered, sympathetically, "an' I tried ter save it fer ye, but Miss Eunice say how it would spile yer carpit-bag, an' fer us ter eat it up, an' make you some mo', and we an' de chillun had a party, an' it was mighty good, an' me an' Rachel gwine ter pull you some mo' candy termorrer!"

The smallest detail of that evening is indelibly impressed upon my mind. "Torm," said Rachel, "dere's Aunt Nacky's bell." "Well, come on, help me bring in supper," said Torm. "I got a heap ter bring in ternight." Going to the kitchen with them, I heard Torm say, "Unc' Rock, Mistis wants you — she say come ter de dinin'-room." And there she stood, stirring his dram with her own hands, and cautioning him against keeping his feet wet and taking cold.

CHAPTER IV.

Christmas.

THE threatening weather continued for several days, and hog-killing time was at hand. Clinging to Grandfather with one hand, and holding my nose with the other, I inspected the bad-smelling pens, and cast my eye up at the clouds to note whether in my judgment the process of fattening and the indications of the all-important freeze would culminate at the proper point to secure sausages and spare-ribs for Christmas. The freeze always came, and the hog-pen held such fascination that I could not stay away, but would watch the men until they approached an unsuspecting victim with gleaming knife, when, flying to the house with fingers in my ears, I awaited the shout with which the boys recalled me, just in time for the horrid deed, the sight of which I wished to avoid.

Late in the evening, the scalding and scraping and cleaning being completed, the animals were suspended in long rows, heads downwards, on poles which were

supported by forks placed in the ground, and with gory throats and sunken eyes, silent and reproachful, they slowly stiffened in the cold night air, their white bodies gleaming, ghostlike, in the light of the great fires around which the negroes were gathered, all untouched by the pathetic sight, playing games, singing songs and dancing to the music of two fiddles, the performers perched high on the woodpile, as they wielded their bows, shouted their orders, or roared with laughter at the frequent downfalls of the dusky lads and lasses who rashly bet that "Us kin dance as fas' as you kin play!" The penetrating light of the blazing fires revealed the white dresses and bright kerchiefs of the women, and the eager faces and rapid movements of the men, as they piled high the fires, and kept faithful watch against dogs, or possible wild beasts.

Aunt Silvia, with dark-red shawl drawn over her head, keeping time to the music with foot and voice, as she stirred the giblet stew with a wooden paddle, or renewed the embers on the ash-cake for their midnight feast, very aptly represented the Gipsy and her Kettle, which alone were wanting to complete the weird, fantastic scene.

One morning at breakfast, after we had been at home only a few days, Grandfather said, "Miriam, I believe I will go to the city before Christmas this year, if you will go with me." "Oh, dear," she said, "I have just been away for so long!" "Well, so have I, and I don't feel like going again by myself — come, go with me," said he. "The boat is due tonight at six, and I have a good deal of cotton to ship. Can you be ready? If we wait for the next boat we will not have time. I want to do big things for Christmas this year," with a knowing look up and down the long table, which set us

all to wriggling. "Very well," said Grandmother, "I will get ready," and immediately all hands set to work to help. A great many orders must be given to Uncle Rock, Mammy, Torm and the others, and Aunt Eunice and the girls, with Jane to help, packed the trunk. None of us were to go this time, so we contented ourselves with seeing them off.

The hoarse whistle called us to the landing, and we all stood on the levee as the great steamer slowly and majestically approached, with tinkling bells and roaring steam; the long stage swung into position, and as if by magic, the face of the earth was alive with men, the merry laughter of our own black-faced, white-clad people mingling curiously with the rough voice of the mate, and the indescribably intoned boat-song of the red-visaged, red-shirted deckhands, as they transferred the huge pile of cotton bales from the river bank to the lower deck, handling them laboriously with strong iron hooks, all unassisted by the negroes, as, with hands in their pockets, they coolly and critically watched loading operations.

Such a scene occurring at night, was weird, and exciting beyond description. Great torches made of pine or "light'ood" knots, and enclosed in wire baskets, were elevated so as to illumine the yellow waves, the autumn-tinted forest across the river, and the sky itself, bringing into relief the two vast columns of dense black smoke, as they poured from the tall chimneys and mingled with the clouds on high, heaving and rolling with ceaseless motion, as if struggling to repress the furious-looking dark-red flames which occasionally shot forth from their enormous depths.

The great bell clanged loudly its signal for leaving. "All aboard!" shouted the mate. "All aboard!" ech-

oed voices far and near, and with a loving farewell for each one, Grandfather and Grandmother released themselves from our clinging arms, and hurried on board, reiterating promises as far as they could be heard, of what they were going to bring us from the city if we would be good children. Eagerly we watched them as they made their way through the crowd, Grandfather conspicuous in his great height, and when they appeared on deck, hats and sunbonnets fluttered frantically in answer to their waving handkerchiefs, until Mammy called, "Come in, chillun, out de wind—hit's bad luck to watch anybody out er sight," and we went in to supper, feeling that the sun had gone down figuratively, as it had literally.

We studied hard to make up for our long holiday, and soon began to look forward to their home-coming, which we expected in two weeks. In just one week the boat was due again on its down trip, but, as often happened, it was delayed many hours, and it was nearly daylight when we were startled by the loud, continued ringing of the great bell, which was a signal that there were passengers for our landing. "Hit's Marster and Mistis comin' home," said Jane. "Hi!" said Torm. "Ain't you got no sense? Don't ye know Marster an' Mistis ain't comin' *down* de river?" And he ran to the landing with a score of others to bring trunks and bags, while we all dressed in the greatest excitement, and none too soon, to meet our big boys, Malcolm and Howard, whose holiday came earlier than they expected on account of illness in their school, so they could spend two weeks with us.

Grandfather and Grandmother came in a few days, much troubled to have missed even a small part of the boys' visit. Torm said it took the force of the planta-

tion to "tote" Marster's freight from the boat, and it did look as if they would never get through with the trunks, boxes, bales and barrels — one big barrel especially suggesting egg-nog — which were stowed mysteriously away, and being opened when the great time came, produced good cheer for every living soul on the place. There were new dresses and suits, coats and wraps, hats, and handkerchiefs, and gloves, and many other things for black and white. Reggie was considered old enough at last to possess a shotgun, which he received with sparkling eyes, and a great show of big boy indifference. Donald's delight over the "Rollo books" was pure and unaffected. A complete dinner set was mine, and a daintily decorated tea set, with cups and saucers so large that I offered to lend them to Grandmother sometimes, and was proud and happy when she accepted and used them with her own for after-dinner coffee, when there was much company. I also received a sure-enough doll's trunk, with a tray and a lock and key; a large, beautiful wax doll with golden curls, and blue eyes, which would open and shut. I dressed her in a pink silk dress which had once been my own, and seated her in my little rocking chair in the parlor. I called her "Loulie" for Uncle Melville's wife, who, being the only bride I had ever seen, was placed on a pedestal and worshipped from afar, since the day he brought her to Penultima. I played with Loulie whenever I wished, and showed her off to my friends with pride, but she never took Miss Thusa's place in my heart of hearts.

The boys' big trunks were running over with bales and bags of chewing and smoking tobacco, so plentiful where they came from; pipes by the gross, calico by the bolt, bandanas by the dozens, and big boxes of stick candy, all of which set the quarters in an uproar. They

also brought us the most magnificent fireworks we had ever seen — Roman candles, pin-wheels, whirligigs, and other wonders, which, with our usual generous supply of little firecrackers, kept the plantation alive all the week. On their way home the boys had spent a few days in the City of N——, near their school, and among other sights had visited the penitentiary, and brought home specimens of wood-work which the convicts were allowed to do in their own time and sell for their own benefit. Toy buckets, tubs, pails and piggins made of staves of red and white cedar, carefully dovetailed together, and bound with brass. I remember a dipper, which was simply a miniature tub, with a handle placed at the proper angle, and a churn made in the same way and holding about a quart, was the joy of my heart for many a day. With a big apron tied on, I splashed and spattered and wasted cream, and was astonished and delighted when the butter really did come in answer to Nervy's song, "Come, butter, come; de King an' de Queen is er standin' at de gate, er waitin' fer some butter an' a cake — Oh, come, butter, come!" Torm made me a little butter paddle, with which I worked and messed with the tiny pat, rounded it off with the greatest care in a cup plate, printed it in lines forming diamonds, under Nervy's instructions, and put it at Grandfather's place at the table. He sliced it off and put it into his hot roll, making no sign except a slight twinkle in the corner of his eye, until I squealed and brought down upon myself the much-dreaded laugh.

The proper celebration of Christmas was a part of Grandfather's religion, and by his special wish, and Grandmother's hearty and efficient aid, not a living creature was forgotten or neglected. All manner of labor was suspended for the entire week, except what

was absolutely necessary for our comfort, and the grand celebration of the day, or number of days, and grave indeed was the offense of child or servant which would merit a rebuke. For weeks beforehand preparations were in progress in order that the holiday might be given over to rest and enjoyment for man and beast. Load after load of wood was hauled and piled mountain high in the back yard, extra help was called in, and axes and shouts resounded until Grandfather's eyes twinkled in satisfaction at the enormous back-logs and logs of all sizes which promised luxurious warmth for all throughout the season.

The house was put in order, with perhaps a new carpet or rug or curtains; Mistress and maid rejoiced in new dress, apron and kerchief, in order that a seemly air of brightness should prevail. The outcome of the hog-killing fulfilled our expectations, and turkeys and chickens enjoyed their meals in merciful ignorance of the reason of their extra richness.

Mammy carefully watched the circle of young hands as they stoned raisins, washed currants, chopped citron, picked nuts and pounded spices, for fear her cake would be short of seasoning, and a long row of loaves appeared, whose thick white coat left the future to decide whether they were fruit, pound or sponge — fancy cakes were not thought much of then. There were tin boxes filled with crisp, delicate tea cakes for the little ones, and tall stone jars, whose close covers failed to keep in the delicious odor of mincemeat, which promised pies for weeks to come. Quantities of eggs, saved from our superabundance, were packed in salt or meal for Christmas egg-nog, and with fruits, nuts and wines from the city, Grandmother's great storeroom was full to overflowing. Cooks and house servants were relieved as

much as possible by women from the quarter, who were pleased to be called to "de great house," and the "many hands made light work."

Christmas seasons appear like shining lights along the line of my past, impressed upon my mind from earliest childhood, by the state of excitement, joy and complete abandon which possessed my home. They were celebrated in much the same manner year after year, but passing over a few years of my life at this time, I seem to recall one occasion with more than ordinary pleasure, the neighborhood being gay with young guests, or perhaps the charm existed in the fact that I was at an age when simply to live is joy.

This particular occasion was brought vividly to my mind this morning as I observed evidences of decorating the church for Christmas, when I went to early communion. As I passed slowly up the broad, gray stone steps, cold and wet with the dew of early morning, the great doors swung silently open at my approach, and I stood for a moment gazing in admiration of the spectacle revealed. The vast interior of the grand city church, with wreaths and holly drest, candles twinkling softly among the evergreens, brass furnishings, and hangings of gold-embroidered white, vases dressed with delicate vines and brilliant hot-house flowers, all combined to form a scene of glorious beauty. It wanted a few minutes to time for service; I moved to my seat and allowed my thoughts to dwell on my surroundings. The dim, religious light prevailed, but a festive air pervaded the holy place, laden with the subtle, penetrating, reminiscent odor of evergreens and redolent of memories sweet and joyous.

Just as the sun, rising in majestic splendor over the spotless earth, poured its earliest beams through the

MIRIAM

magnificent window of stained glass in the east, glinting over the vaulted ceiling of dark polished oak, and casting long lines of glorified light through aisles and archways, the grand organ pealed forth its signal to the choir, a hush fell upon the place, and from the distance came the notes of the Christmas hymn, soft and low, swelling into triumphant melody as the Cross appeared.

Mechanically I rose to my feet and the procession of white-clad forms moved up the aisles, through the sunshine, and entered their places, singing their glad song as they marched. Infinite space divided me from the familiar scene. The "Vanished Hand" drew aside the veil. "The Voice that is still" yet echoed from Memory's distant shore, "Cease your wild wailing, sad Heart; put back the tears, and look while you may."

Forty years arranged themselves into a vista of diminishing circles, reaching far into the past, through which I gazed, spell-bound, at the spectacle revealed. Bright sunshine, snow-covered earth far and wide; ice-bound twigs and branches glittering in the light; a little brown church, nestling so closely among the pine, cedar and holly, with clinging vines, as to make easy the task of Christmas decorating, for which the young people of the two neighborhoods were gathering. A train of plantation wagons appeared, each with its bed of clean hay, on which were seated a party of six or eight ladies; its negro driver in rough coat, white woolen muffler and mittens, and cap drawn closely over the ears; its four shining mules, their nostrils emitting whirling sprays of vapor, as they deftly made their way up the steep hills, or rattled down at a pace which caused the older members of the party to hold their breath in terror, and the younger ones to scream with laughter, — the frozen, slippery condition of the roads making holding back

impossible, notwithstanding the occasional "Whoa!" of the grinning drivers.

A roundabout way was taken to collect the reddest holly berries, the largest bunches of mistletoe, and the longest gray moss, which were effectively used in decorating, and each cross-roads brought its addition to the party. Shouts could be heard in the distance from all directions, before the horsemen appeared with offerings of mistletoe, whose bright leaves and large bunches of opal berries betrayed the perilous heights from which they had been gathered, and caused the girls to bring forth counter attractions in their brightest smiles and most cordial welcomes, vainly hoping to avert the scorn and derision they feared for their own little store.

Within the church preparations were being made for our comfort. Prim Mrs. Halstead, stepping in through the tiny vestry room, whose outer door opened into the side yard of the rectory, was well pleased to find our Torm at his post. "Good morning, Thomas," she said. "You are here, are you?" "Yes, ma'am; I'se here, ma'am; look lak I'se allus de one ter git here fus' an' have dis fire to make," answered Torm, with a smiling face, as he spread his enormous hands, like canvased hams in their white mittens, over the polished stove, now reddening with the heat. "Well, no one could make a better fire, Thomas. Who did you bring with you?" "I fotch 'em all, ma'am — Missy and Miss Patty, an' all — dey out dere in de woods gittin' vines — here dey comes now."

Standing in the open door, Mr. Halstead received the party with even more than his usual satisfaction, for St. Mary's was to have the extraordinary honor of the Bishop's visit at Christmas. An unprecedented fall of snow, fourteen inches on a level, took our people com-

THE LITTLE BROWN CHURCH

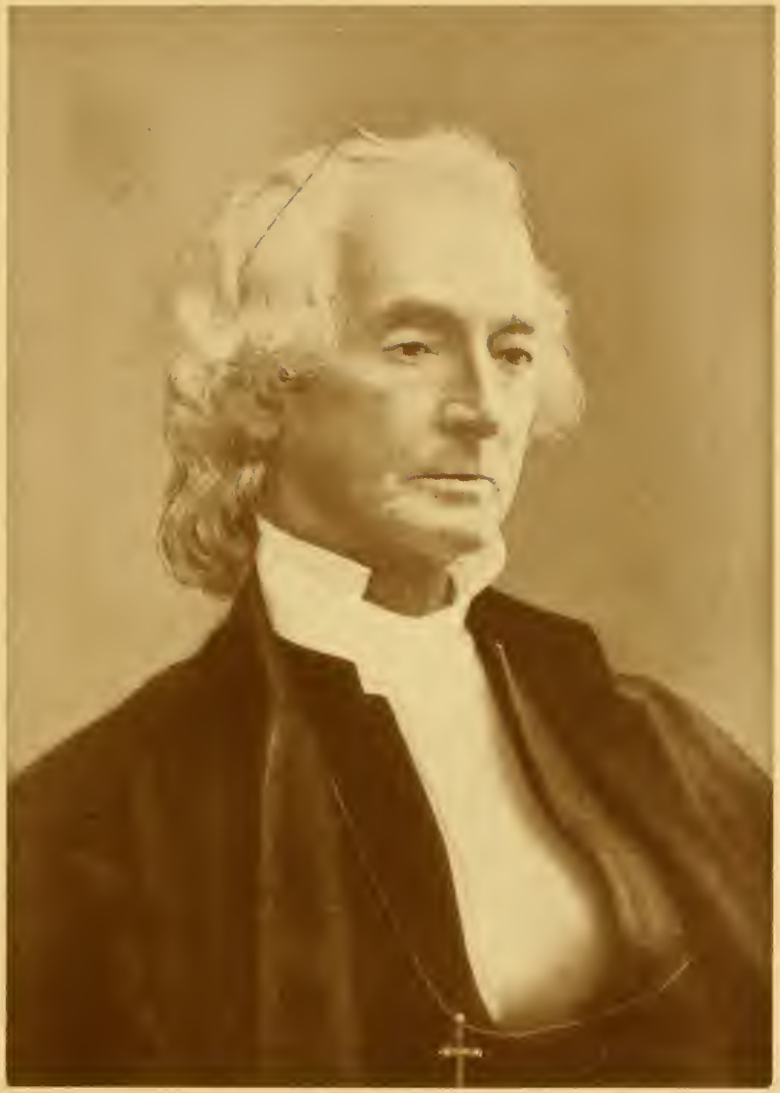
pletely by surprise, and so demoralized the entire neighborhood that no team could be found strong enough, no driver bold enough, to undertake the trip of thirty miles to Durant, the nearest railroad station, so the Bishop found himself a prisoner among us, and very superior were the airs, and very unnatural the graces with which we commiserated the discomfiture of our sister parish of Linden, twelve miles away through the snow, whose time we had monopolized and whose spiritual needs must now await his next visitation.

In came the gay crowd, vainly trying to remember that they were in church, as the rector said, and to reduce their spirits to a proper level, and the work of decorating began in earnest. Torm stretched long cords for the wreaths and busied himself passing hammer and tacks, scissors and twine, bunches of cedar and bits of information from one group or couple to another, ever singling out those who were happily paired off, in the far corners, upon whom to press his attentions. He handed them water, insisted upon their coming nearer the fire, and kept them well supplied with materials, grinning broadly as they made excuses to get him away. "Missey," he said, coming over to me, "jes' look er yonder at Mars' Stuart and Miss Jean — de church ain't gwine ter git dressed 'fore Christmas ef it 'pen's on dem — he jes' er whittlin' cedar, an' she ain't wrapped none er her wreath hawdly — Miss Patty an' all dem young uns is er sewin' Lorry Mundy leaves on dem pas'eboa'd letters, an' jes' look at de white lilies dey done made out er paper! *Dey* ain't got nothin' else to study 'bout." "Now, Torm," I said, "let them alone and bring in some wood for the stove. I'm cold, and we have work to do in here; bring the high stepladder, and here comes Mr. Halstead with Campbell and Ken-

neth to tack these inscriptions over the altar; ask Reggie to bring the letters from the little girls."

"Stand back, everybody," called Kenneth from his elevated stand, "and see if this line is straight. How do you spell Alleluia? 'On earth p-e-a-c-'—what *is* the matter with this *e*?—covered on the wrong side, as I am a sinner! Jean, I'll bet that was your work; don't try to lay it on little Patty; you and Stuart will have to try again to put the final *e* to your *peace!* There, now," glancing at Mr. Halstead, who was laughing silently, "remember, you are all *in church.* Hush, Torm, and help me move this ladder." "Hi, Missy," said Torm, "what dat I tell ye? Don't dat beat yer time, people?"

Very busy, and very consequential, now was our rector. The proper celebrating of two such occasions in one called forth no small amount of energy, and executive ability, and right nobly did the good man prove himself equal to the emergency. As soon as I saw the flutter of his coat-tails, so ludicrously inconsistent with the earnest gravity of his face, I knew he had a scheme on foot, and as soon as I saw his chin with its long gray beard raised high in the air and ducked down into his collar, as he caught sight of me and made for my corner, I knew it had to do with the music. "See here, Miriam," said he, "do you think we could manage to have the vested choir march in singing on Christmas morning?" "Oh, Mr. Halstead! Why, er—why,—day after tomorrow?" "Well," he said, "it is short notice, but you have practiced them pretty faithfully, and they do remarkably well, and I thought it would please the Bishop." "But, Mr. Halstead, their vestments are not all ready, and we have no cross. Grandfather is going to give us one, but I told him Easter would be time enough." "Well," said Mr. Halstead, "I



THE BISHOP

will see to the cross; I will make one of wood, covered with gold paper, and dressed with evergreens, which will answer. There are seven of our own boys at home for the holidays, and four boys are their guests, making eleven, all familiar with the work. With your nine scholars they would make a very respectable choir, and as to vestments, they brought all home for repairs; some of your boys are provided, and the four little fellows might be left out." "Left out!" I cried in indignation. "No, sir; I'll make their new cottas myself, or Grandmother will have it done. I'll manage it, Mr. Halstead. The idea of leaving my little boys out! Yes, sir, I'll manage it; with those big University boys to lead them they will do well, I am sure."

"Missy, hit's er gittin' mighty late," said Torm, and standing off for a last admiring look, we congratulated each other upon the result of our labors, said good-bye to Mr. and Mrs. Halstead, and closed the doors, leaving everything swept and garnished.

"Now, Torm, what *are* you waiting for?" I asked. "Missy, don't you hear Mr. Halstead a-hollerin' at me? He say, 'Wait a moment!'" "Oh, certainly," I replied, "what is it, Mr. Halstead? Is there anything we can do?" "Well, see here, Miriam," said he, "I hate to impose upon good nature,—you have so much to do about the music and other things, but the other wagons have all gone and I am in a dilemma." "Why, what is it, Mr. Halstead? Grandmother charged me to find out if there was anything to be done." "Well, the *Bishop's robe*—it must be done up, and there was no time." "Oh, give it to me," I said. "I'll bring it back Christmas morning when I come to church—I have to come early, you know; I'll have it here in time. Good-bye; we are late, and it is so cold."

And now it was Christmas Eve, and the hilarity at its climax. Grandfather had the big wagon put on runners, and for the first time in our lives we went sleighing. The boys, with Torm to drive, took us to the holly grove in search of a Christmas tree. We selected one with bright red berries, and fastened pine boughs here and there to relieve the stiffness, with their drooping tassels and brown burrs. They placed it in a tub of sand in the big front parlor, which had four large windows opening down to the floor, in order that all the people might have full view of the brilliant sight from the gallery. We covered the tub down to the floor with gray moss and piled it high with apples and oranges, decorated the branches with balls and festooned strings of popcorn, and then, after placing as many wax candles as could possibly be made to stick, to be lighted at the proper time, we closed the door securely, leaving Santa Claus in undisturbed possession, and the great chimney open for his use.

"Mammy, where are the boys?" I asked, going into the dining-room. "De Lawd knows, honey," she answered; "dey gone off somewhar wid Torm, an' he ort ter be here settin' de table; I dunno what dey doin' 'dout dey fixin' de Christmas gun [a large hollow log, stuffed with moss and rags and plenty of powder, and a fuse arranged so as to explode it at daylight] — I want 'em to put it a long way fum de house ef dey *got* ter have it — hit le-ter-mo-ter skeered de life out er me las' year. Now, here ye come!" And Mammy's turban began to quake ominously. "What ye doin' c'lectin' 'roun' me wid yer han's in yer pockets, er whistlin' so innercent? Y'up to some devilment — yes y'is, too — I knows ye! Git fum berhine me! Oh, Je—! Dar, now, ye le-ter-mo-ter made me say a bad word!" And

Mammy whirled around, flirting her skimpy skirts as far as they would go, and caught Reggie by his waistband. "Now, Regnaul," she said, "listen ter me; *ef you does* th'ow *another one* er dem firecrackers — under my coat-tail — I'll ketch you an' I'll kiss you in de mouf, right in de presunce er all dem gals! — You hear me, mun, 'fo' Gawd, I'll do it! I notter gwine ter be pestered dis er way, ef ye is nineteen year old!" And for a little while Reggie was very careful, knowing full well that if Mammy chose to carry her threat into execution she would have able support.

The day of days was ushered in before light by a bang and a roar, which testified to the accuracy of Torm's calculations as to the length of that fuse, and there was no more sleep or rest for old or young. The fires were kept up all night in our rooms in order that the children might not suffer from the cold, when they *must* investigate the long row of stockings which were "hung by the chimney with care" in Grandmother's room. When Uncle Rock came with fresh logs for the fire, he tiptoed to the door, which he opened suddenly and shouted, "Christmas gif! Christmas gif!" to the whole flock of little white-clad, barefooted ones, dancing with ecstacy and glee, whom Mammy and Miranda were vainly trying to get into their clothes. They raised an answering cry, and instantly, from every nook and corner of the house was echoed, "Christmas gif! Christmas gif, Marster! Christmas gif, Mistis! Christmas gif, chillun!" in unrestrained freedom and joy, all knowing full well that their most daring advances would be cordially and affectionately accepted and returned, for was it not Christmas?

Grandfather and Grandmother, undisturbed by the noise and confusion, lent their aid to all schemes with

ready sympathy, unless some one, in the ardor of excitement, would have imposed upon the young or helpless, who were promptly and vigorously protected.

Each one protested violently, "I caught you, Christmas gif'—you got ter gimme somethin'!" but all were willing to wait for the tree after dinner, well satisfied that they were to be generously remembered.

The beautiful snow added zest to every undertaking; the air was thick with flying balls and resounding with good-natured shouts, as boys and girls of all ages, sizes and colors, mingled in a happy throng, disregarding benumbed toes and fingers, wet collars, icicles thrust down backs or up sleeves, or sometimes a bloody nose. Going into the warm kitchen to thaw our limbs for more vigorous action, the flop-flop of a dozen egg-beaters greeted our ears. "Oh, the egg-nog!" we all cried. "Mammy, *let* us help." "Git out de way!" said Aunt Nacky, who was nervous and excited, in constant dread of the fearful firecrackers. "Lemme make out my rolls; how in de name er Gawd I gwine ter git breakfus'? Ef de white folks keep er comin' in de kitchen I jes' well's ter put on my bonnet and set in de parlor—dar, now!" "Well, come on, chillun," said Mammy; "hit's ready ter car'y in de house, anyhow," and lifting an enormous bowl, she led the way, followed by a procession of assistants, similarly loaded, and the entire family immediately crowded around her. "Could egg-nog possibly be made in anything but a *yellow* bowl?" asked Miss Hale, regarding the long row on the pantry shelf with interest. "They certainly are a good match for the foaming contents." "Miss Leslie's recipes always begin, 'Break a dozen eggs into a yellow bowl,'" said Grandmother, smiling. "I ain't studdin' Miss Leslie," said Mammy, with a scornful toss of her tur-

baned head. "What dat ole maid know 'bout cookin'?" "She ain't nothin' but a Yankee, nohow." "Take care, Aunt Polly," said Miss Hale, with a good-natured laugh. "I'm a Yankee!" "No, ye'ain't, neither; ye ain't what I calls a Yankee. Now, gimme de ladle an' fetch yer glasses an' yer cups an' yer bowls an' yer spoons — Hoo-rah!"

After breakfast Torm drove the wagon close to the back gallery through snow up to the hubs; the hay was thick and soft, and Grandmother sent rugs, blankets and comforters until there seemed to be no room left for the children; but we all crowded in, with Jane to take care of Unie, and hurried off, for I must get to the church early for a last practice with my boys. We were driving around the curve to the front, when Torm pulled up and listened. "Ain't dat Mammy callin'? Yes; an' what is dat she's a-wavin' at us? Missy, hit look lak a red-en' towel. I ain't sayin' it *is* a red-en' towel, but it *look* lak it," and he waited near the steps. "Who dat callin' me, Mammy? You black nigger, you — I ain't none er yo' mammy! Git down out er dat wagin an' come git dis bun'le. I notter gwine ter step down in de wet in my cyarpit slippers! I done pin hit up good, Missy, in one er yo' Grandmother's big new towels." "Oh! — the Bishop's robe!" I cried. "Just suppose I had forgotten it!" "Suppose *ye had* fergot it? Ef ye ain't fergot it I dunno what ye done den," said Mammy. "Ole Marster sho' would er spoke de Word dis day in his nice black suit ef it hadn't er been fer Mammy, which 'pear lak ter me would er look mo' suitubler, anyhow, den all *dis yere!* De Lawd er mussy, jes' look at dat chile, all out de kiver! Missy, you *promised* me to keep de comferter over her years! Gawd bless its little mouf, hit's *too cole* fer you to go out — come, le's me an' you

go back in de house an' make some candy — come on ter Mammy, honey," and forgetting her "cyarpit slippers," Mammy stepped down into the snow and held out her hands to Unie, but Torm said, "Hoo-ee! Ain't Reggie an' dem gwine ter sing pretty ter day? *I* wants ter see 'em in dey white robes jes' lak de angels." "Oh, Torm, do go on," I said. "You shet up, nigger," called Mammy. "She was jes' studdin' 'bout comin' ter me ef *you* hadn't er put in yer big mouf — I gwine ter tell Mistis on you, mun! Pull dat comferter over dat chile's *years,* Missee—e—e!"

We reached the church after a laborious, but withal delightful, drive through the snow. "Jane, carry this bundle to the vestry room. I'll be there as soon as I get the children in," I said. "Now, children, remember, there will be a good many outsiders here today,— I mean people who are not accustomed to our church, and our ways, so we must all be very careful to attend to the prayer books and rise and kneel in time — don't forget. Grandfather and Grandmother and all the others will be here directly — now be good — I must go to see about the music." And, swelling with importance, I said, "Come, Reggie, call the choir boys and let's go over the hymn; we have no time to lose before eleven o'clock. Here come Mr. and Mrs. Halstead now."

I seated myself at the little organ and we had a last rehearsal, and I must own up to no small degree of pride as their really fine voices rose in perfect harmony, and keeping time with their march. It needed only a glance at Mr. Halstead's face to assure me of our success. And now it was nearly time for the congregation to assemble — indeed, many were already there, and I went into the vestry room to await the hour for service, when I must enter the church first of all. "Jane," said

I, "unpin the Bishop's robe and hang it *right there* beside Mr. Halstead's surplice, where he can't help seeing it—there, that will do." "Torm," said Jane, "whar dat towel?" "Dar hit right dar berhine Missy on dat ch— ! Well, I know I seed it dar—whar is it?" and Torm stared blankly at the chair. "Dat what I axin' *you,*" said Jane; "whar is it?" "I know I put it dar. Sis' Polly charge me ter take keer Mistis' red-en' towel, an' now you done los' it! You better git dat towel, mun!" "Now, Missy," said Torm, "you hear dat nigger? What I got ter do wid de towel?" "Oh, never mind *now,* Jane," I said, "it must be right around somewhere—it will turn up." Little did I dream *where!* "Here come the Bishop and Mr. Halstead; I must go. Are all the boys here? Yes, my four dear little ones and all—Reggie, *do* look after them."

The voluntary, which we decided, in view of so much more singing than usual, must be instrumental, was safely over. I raised my fingers from the keys, listening intently for the "Amen" which should end the Bishop's prayer, when the hymn must begin, and clear and distinct in the stillness came Torm's voice from behind the open door: "Jane! *Dar* dat towel. Name er Gawd! can't ye git it?" "No!" *"Oh, mercy!"* thought I, like a flash. "Can't they let the old towel alone?" "Amen," sang the boys, and recovering myself by a mighty effort, I began the accompaniment exactly on time. Oh, how beautifully they were doing their part, viewed from the little mirror I had placed before me, in order to see behind my back. What an inspiration to do my best! How pleased the Bishop and Mr. Halstead would be ! Oh, *everything* was all right—and yet there surely was something in the air—what was the matter? How I *did* want to look, but I must play

until the hymn was over. They were beginning to move into the stalls (twenty chairs, arranged in rows).

Mr. Halstead and the young rector from Linden moved reverently, one on each side, to allow the Bishop to pass to the chancel. *What* was the matter with the young rector from Linden? *Was* he— ? Oh, of *course* not, but what a cough he had! How red his face was! "Amen," sang the boys once more, and I turned to look. *What on earth* was that so persistently dogging the Bishop's footsteps, flapping impudently in time with every motion as he moved slowly up the three steps to the altar? Oh, could it be,—"The Lord is in His Holy Temple; Let all the earth keep si——" "Look at dat towel!" cried Unie, from her perch on the back of Grandfather's seat, where, with his arm around her, she viewed the scene, so new and beautiful to her. Never shall I forget the look of mingled consternation and condemnation with which our good rector regarded his flock, when he jerked his head up from his book and laid off that long forefinger in a comprehensive sweep, as he had a habit of doing to give emphasis to his words, and found *them* all, from Grandfather down to little Unie, struggling in frantic, but futile, efforts to "keep silence before Him"!

The question in every heart, "What must be done?" was quickly settled by Patty, the tom-boy, the daredevil, the promoter of all schemes, the teacher of all tricks, the adviser of all adventures,—bright, beloved Patty! Without a questioning look to anyone, she moved noiselessly from her seat, passed into the vestry room in a twinkling, and, appearing at the altar before we knew what was in her mind, she tried to remove the offending appendage, but that pin was put in *to stay,* and was far up on the under side! Patty disappeared under the

PATTY

Bishop's robe, and the dear Father in God was betrayed into opening wide his eyes, but the benevolence which had characterized his life was shining in their clear-gray depths, the blessed song without words, which had brought hope to many a fainting heart before, reassured her as she looked fearfully up at him, plainly saying, "I am very much surprised at this proceeding, but it is *Patty* — it must be right."

We blundered through the service, becoming gradually quiet, until at last, with bowed heads and uplifted hearts, we beheld the Bishop enter the pulpit and stand before us in his noble beauty, his magnetic, angelic personality claiming and holding our loving and devoted attention through his long sermon.

There was a large class confirmed that day, and with the gentle, firm pressure of those dear hands on our heads we felt that ever thereafter to sin was to compromise *him* — to bow his beautiful white head in grief and sorrow for us; so comprehensive and all-powerful was his love, embracing all within the great field of his wonderful work.

Never was there such a blending of purity and wisdom, gentleness and power, tender love and unfaltering condemnation, as in our grand old Bishop, our beloved "Father in God." His family are worthy representatives, sons and grandsons being in the ministry, and daughters and grand-daughters, as beautifully, if less conspicuously, continuing the great work, which they accepted as a legacy of priceless worth. It has been my privilege through life to call them my closest friends; I love and honor them, and thankfully accept their loving ministrations as my birthright.

The Bishop went home with us, of course; so did Mr. and Mrs. Halstead, and the young rector from

Linden, and with our own family and their guests, we had thirty-one at our Christmas dinner. The Bishop enjoyed the dinner, admired the church decorations, praised the music, lauded Patty's daring act, and no one laughed so merrily over the event of the morning as he. He played with the children, told riddles to the young folks, telling us to hold up two fingers if he should be guilty of repeating one of last season's jokes; he held a levee for the old darkies after dinner, and was the life of the occasion at the grand opening of the doors for the tree.

So ended Christmas at Penultima, and so ends the story of my life, which was one long dream of peace and happiness until Grandfather passed away, when the earth seemed to fall from beneath my feet — all was changed and dark. Dear Grandmother folded her beautiful hands and waited, rousing herself after a while for my sake. "Yes, dear child," she said, "your Uncle is right, — you need a change; you must go home with him to spend the winter," and, overruling my objections, she sent me away from her, little dreaming that it was for the last time; she followed Grandfather that winter — then the house was burned, and I was left fatherless, and motherless, and homeless.

It seemed as though it would break my heart to leave her in her loneliness, but she had other grandchildren with her for the time, and she would have it so. As we waited on the levee for the steamer, I turned for a last look at my home, in full view from our elevated position. The north wind blew across the river, rolling the variegated autumn leaves in brilliant drifts over the lawn. The sun was low and cast its slanting rays over a scene whose beauty needed only the element of life, without which there is a solemnity, a gloom, almost

amounting to desolation, with all due respect to the beauties of nature. This need was provided in perfection by the presence of Grandmother McNeill, as she stood in the open doorway, waving her hand to us, her full, commanding figure erect and graceful, her eye deep blue and sparkling, though seventy winters had left their snows on her noble head, converting her once sunny locks into a crown of glory — spotless, changeless white. She was a picture of perfect old age, a loving and lovely tribute to the tender care and devotion of our venerated Grandfather, who, in his youth and strength, the proudest and happiest of men, had led her to the altar. "Do not ask me to leave here, my children," she would say, when each one begged her to share his or her home. "More than half a century ago my husband seated me in this drawing-room, on our wedding day, and with his arms about me, and his kisses on my lips, he said: 'Come to my heart, and to my home, Miriam, my wife, — *our* home now. We call it Penultima — the *last home but one!*' My star of hope has set, but its after-glow is guiding me surely to *him,* and I must go from *Penultima!*"

"Till death us do part
Ever one to remain,"
To the new-plighted heart
Was a whisper of pain.

For the soul never dies,
And the life that is fled
Waits, widowed as I,
Until death us do wed.

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